

**FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF  
FEMALE AND MALE CHARACTERS IN SELECTED  
DRAMA PLAYS IN *ISHASHALAZI***

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## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ART, in the Graduate Programme in

GENDER STUDIES, University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was / was not used (delete whichever is applicable) and that my Supervisor was informed of the identity and details of my editor. It is being submitted for the degree of MASTER OF ART in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation focuses on the textual analysis of the representation of female and male characters in the drama book *Ishashalazi*, based on the two drama stories: *Kwakuhle kwethu!* and *Umninimuzi*. Both of these stories depict male and female characters differently. The findings of this study suggest that the representation of male characters in the selected stories is generally in line with patriarchal attitudes and reflect women's suppression. Male characters are positively represented by most texts and reflect triumph, intelligence, and strength and these forms of representation affirm the traditionally held beliefs about men as rulers and heads of families. On the contrary, this study finds that the representation of women differs greatly from that in which males are represented. Women are given feminine roles represented negatively as failures or as being capricious and disrespectful of social norms. The division of labour into gender-hyper-specific roles widens the gap of differences in the representation of female and male characters.

Situated in the imbalance representation is culture. Texts and *Ishashalazi* in particular, echo unequal representation of male and female characters by promoting the observation of cultural principles in the roles played by characters. African culture is the major phenomenon that promotes patriarchy and ensures that women remain suppressed by the rule of men. Such processes are perpetuated by texts that we read every day. Texts are powerful means of sending messages. It is through texts that social actions and processes are interpreted and acted. Thus textual meaning is both visible and invisible. Through analysis of the two drama plays the hidden meaning of

text is disclosed and it is through this analysis that actions that promote the marginalization of women are challenged.

Family is one of the institutions where women are oppressed on the pretext of culture (Cameron. 1990). The findings of this study allude to Cameron's observation that the roles assigned to female characters serve as a valuable clue to the constitution of women's silence. Roles represented by female characters in *Ishashalazi* do not gain the respect of the greater community instead, some (such as women who violate cultural principles) actually damage the reputation of women and tarnish their image. Thus culture oppresses women while giving opportunities to their male counterparts to dominate and exercise authority over women. It is with such social actions and processes that this study concerns itself. Sexist language and stereotypes used by society continue to pose problems that reflect negatively on women. In responding to such challenges this study analyses the representation of female and male characters from a feminist standpoint and calls for the emancipation of women and children.

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## **DEDICATION**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

This chapter presents the layout of the study of the feminist representation of the male and female characters based on two plays in *Ishashalazi*. The chapter provides background to the focus of the study in terms of the plays that are analysed, the context of both the plays *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*, the objectives of the study, motivation of the study; structure of the dissertation and the role of women and men in Zulu culture.

Most societies across cultures neither give similar treatment nor award similar positions to males and females. This practice is mostly common within family settings, at the work place, and even in some religious organizations in society. The state is not an exceptional case in this matter. For example, South Africa has long been known for her policy of segregation which discriminated against race and gender, among other things. Discrimination on the basis of race is not the focus of this study, however, discrimination linked to gender is a cause for concern in this study. It puts the family at the centre of scrutiny since the two stories that are analysed revolve around family lives.

The analysis of data draws links from the general behaviour of men and women in general and within the Zulu culture in particular. Such a focus helps to understand the

manner in which female and male characters are represented in *Ishashalazi*. In doing this women's interests come to the fore in this study.

## Background of the study

This study is a literary investigation into the role and images of women and men as presented in dramatised stories. It seeks to describe and analyse the two variables as they are illustrated in selected plays in a Zulu book, *Ishashalazi*. *Ishashalazi* is comprised of one-act plays. This book is exclusively male-authored. It was written by Ntuli and Mbhele (1989) and edited by Kubheka, all of whom are well-known and highly-respected authors. The book consists of seven plays, namely: *Umninimuzi*, *Inkunzi inqindwe izimpondo*, *Umthetho ngumthetho*, *Isomiso*, *Isiphosiso*, *Ngingumenziwa* and *Kwakhule kwethu*. This study, however will only focus on two drama plays namely, *Umninimuzi* and *Kwakhule kwethu*. The reasons for choosing these two plays are discussed in the context of the study which is the next sub topic in this chapter.

Covering all the seven plays in this study would not have been advisable as not enough attention would be given to each. Thus, in accordance with the weighting of this dissertation, and in doing justice to this study one had to be selective. Out of the seven plays in the book *Ishashalazi* only two suitable for the current study.

The selection of these two plays in this study was motivated by the fact that both plays have almost similar incidents but are treated differently. Both *Kwakhule kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* are placed within a marriage setting and show power relations within this institution. The beliefs held by characters in these stories are rooted in the traditional lifestyle of the Zulus and thus reflect some similarities in the manner they approach things. This is not a comparative study but a study that analyses the image

and role of characters in the two plays of *Ishashalazi*. Since the plays relate to both rural and urban life this study puts these two areas in the centre of the text and looks at the manner in which ideas are constructed about urban and rural females versus the male role within marriage.

I am concerned with issues relating to the manner in which women are represented in texts. In traditional Zulu lifestyle women live a life that revolves around the home. This practice has been accepted without question by most women as it is implemented under the pretext of being part of cultural principles within the Zulu tradition. This practice is further encouraged and promoted by the texts that Zulu speakers read. Texts promote supremacy of men over women without being objective in questioning the legitimacy of the status quo in society. In investigating character representation, this work focuses largely on the use of language, gender roles assigned to characters, the identities that are constructed thereafter and the influence culture has in effecting power. This work also looks at women as key participants in society and in relation to their gender subordination and cultural biases that limit their visibility to the private sphere.

*Ishashalazi* does not take cognizance of women's responsibility in society in the manner that gives them credit; instead as Phillip (2003) points out, it consciously or unconsciously focuses largely on applauding men's supremacy and promoting their position in society. Women are of value to society across cultures in their relationships which are mostly meant for their subordination. In most cases women are not aware of this subordination as it comes under the pretext of culture and it then bolsters a form of patriarchy within different families in society. Both plays depict

rural and urban lives with opposing lifestyles. The reading of the book reveals that both plays represent women and men in distinctly different ways with a strong bent towards patriarchal tradition.

It is not the aim of this study to criticize the Zulu tradition, or any tradition for that matter, but it is essentially to bring to scrutiny the manner in which women and men are presented in texts under the pretext of culture. I have respect for culture, and in this case, Zulu culture in particular, is commendable but it is essential to state upfront that this study does not intend to accuse the authors of deliberately creating characters with sexist points of view and roles, but is concerned with regard to female versus male images revealed in the two plays in *Ishashalazi*. This emanates from what the feminist literary perspective charges. It requires that the reader call into question the implicit assumption of art that has negative conceptualisation that limits women and men as observed by Sylvia Lizarraga (2005):

It is well known that literary conventions are established by virtue of the customs, values and traditions of a society. The manner in which an author handles the characters is entwined with those precepts; the points of view imputed arise from them and only in exceptional cases do they differ from them. (Lizarraga, 2005: 1).

Authors can manipulate readers in the manner in which they construct characters (Boshego, 2007) and in the process play a significant role in upholding certain cultural principles with regard to what and how women and men should enact their roles. The fact that *Ishashalazi* once formed part of the curriculum contributed to choosing it for this study. The book was mostly used in the past years for more than a decade by senior classes of South African schools as prescribed by the Department of Education. The study submits that the role of characters portrayed by the authors

(whether negative or positive) must have influenced school children to accept their treatment as believable and real and thereby contribute to formulating fixed roles for women and men. Although it is outside the scope of this study to investigate the impact the authors' representation may have had on school children and their later life, Boshego (2007) argues that the author plays a significant role in formulating reader's knowledge and understanding about values bestowed upon women and men characters. As Weatherall (1990) posits authors have power over language as they use it to promote particular social and cultural beliefs and suppress others. With regards to the readers of *Kwakuhe kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* authors' beliefs of any kind may have made a major impact on the children's lives.

Authors play a significant role in influencing their audience, especially in prescribed texts, as is the case in *Ishashalazi*. As Richard Dyer in O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2005: 73) puts it: "(O)ne apprehends reality only through representations of reality, through texts, discourses, images". In line with the Zulu tradition, its literature largely presents marriage for women entailing a most submissive role (Ncube, 2001). Surely most people who come in to contact with such texts will have an understanding of such representation as a true reflection of the Zulu tradition. Building on Ncube's position and drawing links between the dominant patriarchal Zulu tradition and its literature, Gumede (2002) notes that although a woman ideally had power as a grandmother and mother, as a wife she submitted to her husband and his family. On the other hand, men's role is differentially represented. It is apparent from these authors' statements that as women and men are not regarded in the same manner, their image in literature is likely to reflect these roles. For instance, the image of traditional women has a strong bent for what is expected by tradition. A woman is expected



mainly to live for others rather than for herself. There may be a possibility that women represent the views and opinions of others owing to the position they hold in society. The purpose of this research is to investigate women in *Ishashalazi* responses and how they respond to the ideal tradition that is overshadowed by the traditional, suffering ideal of womanhood. An analysis of the plays of *Ishashalazi* intends to find out if and how this ideal is represented by the authors.

Affirming the fact that we know and understand the world through language and representations, Sihra (2007) argues that language constructs the world and reality by naming it, categorizing it and representing it. It is through language use that one relays a message. Authors are no exception to this regard. They utilize language to suit their aims in forwarding whatever information they need to impart to their readers. This study therefore analyses the characters' use of language in terms of speech act to convey what they regard as the role of women and men of a particular setting (urban or rural). "Speech act is an act that a speaker performs when making an utterance" (Searle, 1969). Examples of such speech acts are claim, insist, command, instruct, threaten, apologize, pardon, congratulate, regret, among others. According to Searle, to understand language one must understand the speaker's intention. Since language is intentional behavior, it should be treated like a form of action. Evident to both the stories is the use of such speech acts by characters in acting their roles. As Searle points out, they communicate a message and that in turn is associated with a particular character, hence his or her representation. The representation of characters is also linked to the way they speak and this on its own creates gender differentiation and stereotypes in texts. Women are represented in a begging manner through the choice of speeches they use. For example, they may be represented as characters who

long to please their male counterparts while males' speech is mostly of an authoritarian nature. Such forms of speech affect the manner characters are perceived in society and their representation in texts creates fixed perceptions regarding how a specific gender should speak.

Any speech is addressed in a particular language and in turn relays a meaningful message to its audience. Grace (1987) states that human species, and no other, possess the one essential tool which makes a social construction reality possible. That tool is language as exemplified in literary work by written texts. Language is both the means by which reality construction is accomplished and a means by which the realities, once constructed, are preserved and transmitted from person to person and from generation to generation (Grace, 1987). Grace indicates the powerful force humans possess in constructing reality using language. It is through this language that texts are continuously keeping their 'reality' for future generations. This study further investigates whether or not this is ideal in the selected stories of *Ishashalazi*.

Employing feminist methods of text analysis and the theory of representation, this research focuses on the manner in which authors of *Ishashalazi's* construction and representation of generally-assumed positions and role of women and men is done. As part of the discussion, the dissertation inevitably pays particular attention to the representation of female and male characters, and on the prominence given male dominance, which as Matshilo (2007) posits, continues to take place at several levels of society.

Within the analytical categories of roles and images this study looks at gender relations. The study investigates what role women and men undertake in their

relationships and in turn what images authors present. Character roles are linked to their gender and this representation creates the impression that the world only has binary characters with fixed roles. Besley and More (1990) maintain that texts that do not depict any women at all or say nothing about gender relations are a feminist concern as they ignore societal realities. Feminists' motives for analyzing literature are not necessarily about reading with the intentions to praise or to blame, to judge or to censor (Besley and More, 1990). It is mostly to assess how the text invites its readers to understand what it means to be a woman or a man and so to engage with existing values (Besley and More, 1990). This research therefore explores how women and men are portrayed and if the portrayal is the same for rural and urban characters.

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The seven plays of *Ishashalazi* are categorized into one act plays for the Stage, Radio and TV. The categorization of the plays is not an issue under investigation, instead the fact that they are presented in text form makes it possible to investigate them for this study. The plays are each based in a particular context. Both *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* are contextualized in a rural area and are in touch with the urban area which continuously reflects some influence on rural people in a number of different ways. Both plays have characters who work in urban areas in order to earn a living and consequently the very fact that they work there impacts on their lives and on those of people around them.

Both plays take place within a marriage institution in Zulu culture wherein gender roles and relations are presented. Furthermore, certain implications related to gender roles can be drawn from the manner in which characters from urban areas and rural areas behave in both cases. Thus this study seeks to understand differing lifestyles in relation to whether they are from rural or urban areas. The context of the plays therefore plays an essential part as some roles and images are presented in either rural or urban style. In selecting the two plays, their contexts also have a major influence, hence the need to overview them.

Greene (2006) states that urban areas represent and support most human activities. When tracing back the origin of urban areas, especially within the black community, they were more politically than socially or economically motivated. While Greene's (2006) statement may be relevant to other communities, I am skeptical accepting it as

equally true within the South African context. Even if this is not the focus of this study I feel it is of paramount importance that it is highlighted in this study as it has linkage to power and domination which are the focus of this study. Urban towns in black communities within the South African context were meant to exclude blacks and remove them from interfering with the white minority group that had the privileges all to themselves. It will therefore make sense in *Ishashalazi* to learn that individuals living in rural areas consider staying in an urban area more desirable as this opportunity has long been privileged to a particular racial group. Nevertheless, since 1994 South Africa has been trying to bridge this gap by developing rural areas and accommodating more black people in urban cities.

In the analysis and throughout the discussion, the title of the book *Ishashalazi* will be used interchangeably with the two plays, *Kwakhule kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* under investigation. *Ishashalazi* thus refers to the two plays and not the whole book. Furthermore, this research project has a set of elements that form the fundamental background of this study and upon which the questions of this study are based and answered. Gender roles and relations, patriarchy, language and marriage are all four elements that necessitate the need for this study.

## CONTEXT OF THE PLAY: KWAKUHLE KWETHU

In the Zulu culture the expression *Kwakuhle kwethu* means a joyous expression by in-laws when they get a bride who will become part of the family. It is a five character play which includes MaSibiya, who is married to Makhoba and they have two children, a son, Dabula, and Thembi, a daughter. The Makhoba family live in a rural area. They hold beliefs and customs of traditional Zulus. Though MaSibiya is a vocal and persistent wife, her efforts to get things done her way are stifled by cultural customs and taboos held in her society. Makhoba seem to ignore his wife's opinions even if she has a valid point in some matters and he frequently gets annoyed by her nagging. He disagrees with his wife in most of the matters pertaining their home.

Dabula has a good relationship with his father. Dabula works in Johannesburg (an urban area) and visits home occasionally. Dabula finds a girlfriend, Lizzy, who he intends marrying. He takes the first step by introducing his girlfriend to his family. Lizzy's lifestyle is at odds with that of the Makhoba family in a rural area. She does not show the expected behaviour to her future mother in-law whom she greets like her equal on their first encounter and Lizzy does not get a warm welcome from MaSibiya who regards Lizzy same age as her. Apart from that, Lizzy does not do the expected duties expected of her as both a woman and a *Makoti* (bride). Instead all the domestic chores are done by MaSibiya and Thembi. Masibiya clearly does not like Lizzy and is against the fact that Dabula intends marrying her. Dabula is aware of his mother's feelings and seeks approval from his father. Makhoba gives his blessings to his son to go on with the wedding arrangements despite MaSibiya's disapproval. Furthermore,

Makhoba states that as *Makhonya* (ruler) his word goes in spite of his wife's feelings; he has the last word in his house.

Thembi, Dabula's sister, is diligent, warm and respectful rural girl. She is taken by her future sister in-law's style and has found a friend in Lizzy. Lizzy instructs Thembi to take her luggage to their bedroom. Thembi looks happy about having a sister in-law from an urban area. Her attitude towards Lizzy annoys her mother who becomes furious that her child is being influenced by Lizzy.

## CONTEXT OF THE PLAY, UMNINIMUZI

*Umninimuzi* has four characters, namely, Ntuli, MaSibisi, Zokwenzani and Insizwa. Ntuli still holds beliefs and traditions of the Zulu culture. This story takes place in a rural area and in some way has links with an urban area. Ntuli has lost his job and has been without one for two years. He stays at home all day long and depends on his daughter, Zokwenzani, who works in one of the firms in the nearby urban area. She has become the breadwinner of the family. MaSibisi meanwhile is losing the respect of her husband as she continuously scolds him about not hunting for a job. Life does not seem the same now that Ntuli no longer works. MaSibisi does not approve of being supported by Zokwenzani's earnings and calls Ntuli names such as *uqhwayilahle* (jobless). She regards this as a disgrace. Ntuli warns MaSibisi about the way she has been treating him ever since he lost his job. He also notices that Zokwenzani has lost respect for him and blames that on MaSibisi.

Zokwenzani has a boyfriend who frequently sleeps over at her home ever since Zokwenzani started working. Ntuli is suspicious and does not like the idea of Zokwenzani coming home very late from work. Ntuli notices this because Zokwenzani also leaves home very early. Despite that, he notices that Masibisi always waits for Zokwenzani and prepares food for her. Ntuli's suspicions are confirmed when he decides not to sleep early and finds out that Zokwenzani brings her boyfriend home. While MaSibisi, the pompous wife, approves of Zokwenzani's behaviour her father is furious. He does not approve of Zokwenzani's coming late especially as she is a girl and he would want her to get *umendo* (get married) one day. Ntuli orders the boyfriend, presented as *Insizwa* in the story, to leave. Zokwenzani wants her



boyfriend to stay and is supported by her mother who turns a blind eye to Zokwenzani's behaviour. Despite the financial support they get from Zokwenzani, Ntuli chases away both Zokwenzani and Insizwa (grown boy) from his house by ordering Zokwenzani to take all her *masakane* (belongings) with her. His intention is that she leaves with her boyfriend. Zokwenzani takes everything with her and including the plate with food on the table in front of her father. Upon seeing Zokwenzani and *Insizwa* leaving, MaSibisi also leaves with them. After a few minutes Masibisi and Zokwenzani come home to Ntuli asking for forgiveness. Insizwa has, meanwhile, stolen most of Zo's belongings and left with a car he phoned.

In *Kwakuhle kwethu* Dabula brings Lizzy home and he intends marrying her. He has, however, not yet paid *lobola* (bride price) for her. Though he encounters relationship problems on the way, they are definitely not associated with bringing a girlfriend home. In *Umninimuzi* Zokwenzani brings her boyfriend home and her action is received with differing responses. While MaSibisi is aware and accepts her daughter's behaviour, she is also aware that it is traditionally unacceptable and keeps it from her husband. Ntuli does not accept his daughter's actions because he believes he (Ntuli) should be paid *lobola* for Zokwenzani before she can bring her boyfriend home. Male and female characters in both plays have almost similar roles and depict images ideal to the stereotypic view of both male and female genders in society. Furthermore these two plays bring societal expectations and values into perspective. Detailed information on this discussion is covered in the chapter on data analysis.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to find out how male and female characters' role and image are represented in the two plays from *Ishashalazi*. Since both plays take place within family settings, this project looks at the general role of women and men that is suggested by *Ishashalazi* within marriage. It also looks at the extent to which the representation of characters helps or hinders the creation of a fixed image of married women and married men in Zulu society. From the manner in which the characters are moulded, this study seeks to find out what can be learnt about cultural principles or values to which the authors subscribe.

Most texts do not represent genders in the same manner; texts represent female characters in a completely different way from male characters. This study examines the representation of characters and looks at the suppression and domination of women and the implication of the position taken by the author, as stated by Beer (1989).

According to Hall (1997) the representation of characters who are stereotyped often reflect patriarchy. A further objective of this study is investigating the representation of characters in *Ishashalazi* has examining links to patriarchal mode of behaviour and looking at whether the roles of characters are presented in a stereotypic manner. Cameron (1990) refer to such forms of women representation as silencing of women and infers that such silence women is above all an absence of female voices and concerns from high culture. In most roles by female characters in *Ishashalazi*, one finds women voices silenced or silent. Often women are explicitly prevented from

speaking either by social taboos and restrictions or by the more genteel tyrannies of custom and practice (Cameron, (1990). It is such restrictions posed by the authoritative male power that this study challenges and condemns. In addressing such practice this study draws from the roles of women and men in the Zulu culture to understand the manner in which the authors present character roles in *Ishashalazi*.

Language is used to communicate messages to readers and this study examines the manner in which language is used to discriminate. It also looks at the manner language is used to further subscribe to patriarchy in terms of control and domination. It challenges the manner in which language promotes power relations and the subsequent suppression of female voices.

Culture plays a very important role in shaping characters' day-to-day interaction. This study looks at whether and how the representation of characters in the two stories is influenced by cultural conducts. In order to achieve this, it dissects the texts' construction of ideas about urban and rural female versus male role within the marriage institution. Finally, I make conclusions on whether or not the studied texts challenge and/or reinforce traditional gender imbalances within the Zulu community are drawn.

## MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The representation and presentation of characters in most Zulu texts show stereotypic and subjective make up. A very large number of texts do not have a neutral and balanced representation. Some texts highlight a particular group of people thereby submerging the other. Both men and women characters receive unequal representation and exposure resulting in gender imbalance. Mill (1988) asserts that in most male-authored texts, male characters receive prominent and dominating roles thus relating messages that are patriarchal in nature. On the contrary, women are either presented as having their lives fulfilled by the males in their lives or as liabilities in society. Women's successes and triumphs are never revealed in most texts written by males. Where a women shows those qualities they are either suppressed and tabooed by traditions and customs or shadowed as immoral by the powerful. de Beauvoir (1975) infers that most texts by male authors represent authors in power differential and a strong bent towards patriarchal tradition.

Instead of accepting narrations from texts as they are presented, and in order to disclose hidden motives by authors, and change the so-called status quo, the researcher had to initiate an enquiry. My motivation is inspired by the fact that, as a feminist I have to scrutinize and not just accept the status quo. Gone are the days when one reads and accepts whatever is put on paper without questioning it. Much of what is regarded as societal norms is communicated through texts and as such ought to be questioned and challenged. As readers absorb written texts they simultaneously register ideas as fixed and true. In engaging in a work of this kind I can only open the eyes of people of all ages and both genders. Written work is that of humans thus it is

not value-free. Many studies have been conducted in many contexts, including Zulu literature. This study, however, analyzes character representation in texts in the minutest detail in order to truly understand its implications and meaning in a broader sense. Changing stereotypes that are currently held by society about women and men in terms of behaviour and roles is important and I believe readers need to be alert. Women in most Zulu literacy texts are presented in a stereotypic way and as such stereotypes are being encoded by society as normal and acceptable.

This study serves to alert readers of fiction and to create awareness so that texts are read with curiosity, sensitiveness and assertiveness as a way of uncovering gender injustices in texts. Many male-authored texts tend to follow stereotypes in their description of women and thus promote patriarchy and the subjection of women as a norm. Character representation is reduced to certain attributes culturally ascribed to women and men.

This investigation does not only analyse the representation of male and female characters in the drama stories but intends to question women subordination and silence as it appears in most texts shadowed by traditional beliefs and principles. It remains the duty of literary analysts to undo distortions of the past whilst possible so as to draw attention to the way texts and many forms of discourse represent male and female characters in texts. Texts aimed at younger generations should portray gender equity and equality; this will help different communities to have a non-sexist generation in years to come. Furthermore, this will be a way of preserving which is rightfully ours and eradicating that which is a pollutant in society.

Putting a higher value on one section of society than the other is unfair to members of communities. Some texts present characters in such a way that their roles portray the lives of their place of origin; as a result it is possible to associate a particular behavior with a particular area. Characters representing rural areas do not receive the same roles in terms of principles, attitudes and behaviour as those in urban areas. Urban areas take precedence over rural area when they are used in texts. This leaves readers with the assumptions that urban areas are better than rural areas. At the same time it may cause irreparable harm to rural people.

Written texts are often accepted as complete and correct in that a reader tends to assimilate the content without question. The assumptions often remain. One may raise the question of who writes texts. Texts have long been the territory of male authors so it is not surprising that most texts lean towards patriarchal traditions. In an ideal world texts should be neutral and objective. Texts, however, are often man-made are man-made and thus often bias. Male subjectivity does not only mean men holding pens and using language but I think it can also means men prescribing to women what they should and should not do. It means men in control; men using culture and patriarchy in exercising their authority.

I believe it will take years for society to eradicate male bias and the manner in which characters are represented in texts. I think we (women) need to change our mindsets by accepting the fact that we can be subjected to oppression and denial in matters concerning ourselves. Furthermore, we have to stop male persistence in enforcing their hegemony by being vocal not only in addressing women's concerns but also by taking a lead in innovations that accord women opportunities of empowerment.

Language presents the opportunities that may bring back the dignity of women and their rightful, recognized place in society. Texts that serve as the pronouncement of male supremacy that do not only challenge one to want to uncover the underlying truth behind such representations but also motivate one to stand up and challenge such practices.

Language is a form of communication used to express peoples' beliefs, but what happens when language is polluted by those in power? It relays distorted information supporting one group at the expense of the other, (Moi, 1995). Equally, gender representation in language can be biased and seems to put one gender above the other. To be precise, language gives male dominance over females by allowing sexist language to describe women. I am of the opinion that sexist language can be eliminated by addressing the very issues in language such as using one language across gender. Some terms in the English language reflect masculinity when they actually refer to both sexes. Such acts particularly in Zulu society pose a challenge to mount a quest for enquiry.

Kennedy (cited in Cameron, 1985) views patriarchy as a problem related to sexist language and its victims are mostly being women. Texts generally represent women as victims of male sexist language which is often achieved to men's satisfaction. Women are either ridiculed or devalued in language and this is perpetuated in most cases by those who are in power- usually men. As part of language, words, thoughts, are either written or spoken. I have continuously picked from social conversations that women are not only discriminated against but they are also fall victim to having their self-image and integrity belittled. Swear words are often names for women's private

parts. Ironically, some women also use the same swear words about other women. I believe this behaviour reflects the influence of patriarchy and societal laws. Phillips (2003) suggests that patriarchy is based on an ideology that assumes that the dominant view is one that serves male interests in keeping women subordinated, without women necessarily recognizing that this is the case. Phillips implores readers to want to change the image and representation of women in texts as well as in our social settings by firstly, accepting the fact that we (women) are subordinated and secondly, to see the need to change.

In Zulu culture, women are not expected to swear; on the contrary men can swear. It is unfortunate that swearing is detrimental to women. The Zulu names *unyoko* and *uyihlo* referring to mother and father, are used in the third person in the language. One also finds the use of these names in the plays and with them go negative connotations. In such instances one witness patriarchy in action. Such powers of patriarchy prove that men, owing to their superior position have polluted not only language but also the minds of the inferiors. I am basing my opinion on the results of a survey carried out by Kennedy (cited in Cameron, 1990) in which some students did not care about the use of sexiest language. As a female who originate from rural areas it serves as a reminder to address the above issue whilst at the same time sending a message to most writers to be sensitive to the kind of images they create about rural and urban life as well as gender roles.

While this work's main focus is on analyzing the representation of female and male characters, I also find it calling to counter the cultural prescriptions that are effective in our society as they in a way contribute to the presentation of male and female



characters in texts. Zulu culture is men-made and often refers to ancestrally-imposed rules. It not the aim of this research to show disrespect to Zulu culture but rather to corner the behaviour that subordinates women. This study looks at the representation of both male and female characters as informed by among other things, culture. My point is that ancestors lived, made laws and died. If women subordination was among their objectives, it will then form part of the future for generations to come. Texts then come to place.

Many men maintain hegemony as it is informed by societal cultural principles. Society often promotes social conditions of inequality and gender roles which in the long run are detrimental to women. Texts present characters in differing roles that have clearly marked boundaries for male and female characters. Such representation promotes gender-specific roles and further instills and reinforces the manner in which characters are portrayed. This statement should not imply that this study counters our cultural principles but rather be viewed as a study that is concerned about the manner in which texts present characters of the different genders unequally, thus promoting gender inequality.

## STUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In this section I present an outline of all the chapters that will be under discussion. The layout of work will either take a form of sections or subsections respectively. Chapter 1 encompasses the introduction that gives the background of the study. It gives the background to the two stories under investigation in the book *Ishashalazi* and the basis of the study. In order to establish understanding of the selected stories it is essential to give the contexts of each story as that forms part of the issues to be covered. A brief description of *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* gives an overall idea of what each is all about. Problems and issues to be investigated are stated together with the key research questions to be addressed under objectives of the study. A brief motivation for the study gives a narration of the reason for carrying out this investigation.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review. In this chapter I intend to explore relevant literature that significantly forms a basis to the analysis of the stories under discussion. The literature from that has been used to substantiate the problem of the study. In order to understand the manner in which characters are represented in the selected stories, the studying of the role of women and men in the Zulu culture provides clarity and ensures understanding about matters investigated. The fact that both stories are written in Zulu in the contexts of the traditional Zulu culture calls for an explanation of what is actually expected of Zulu men and women. Under this topic I also explore the position of both men and women in general is explored thus disclosing universal beliefs about both which may explain the situation of the characters in both the stories under discussion.

The theoretical framework and methodology of the study is dealt with in chapter 3. This chapter addresses theories by different authors that give substance to the whole study as well as acting as a framework that supports statements, discussions and analysis of this study.

All the textual discourse that has been collected, primarily from *Ishashalazi*, will be analysed in chapter 4 in the light of the theories that form the framework of the study. Chapters 5 comprises of the conclusion of the study as well as suggested recommendations for future investigation.

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND MEN IN ZULU CULTURE

The selected plays in *Ishashalazi* are based on Zulu culture, therefore in order to understand the representation of characters whose presentation is in line with the Zulu culture, the studying of men's and women's roles in general and within the Zulu culture, in particular, is imperative for this study. By studying the role of women and men in the Zulu culture this study hopes to arrive at some understanding regarding the distribution of roles across genders in the Zulu culture as presented by *Ishashalazi* in *Kwakuhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* drama plays.

Each individual has a specific role in society: a women's proper place is in the family and within it as a mother. Proper conduct for a woman is based upon the assumption that a woman's social value is equated with motherhood (Escandon, 1996). The importance of motherhood is centred on the belief that mothers are critical as nurturers of future generations of workers. Thus women's role as educators within the familial structures is paramount to the success of a "perfect family" (Escandon, 1996). In Escandon's view women hold a very essential role in society as they have a very crucial responsibility: that of raising future women and men that will have to lead society in a proper and acceptable manner. Not all societies, however, give value to women. Most societies across cultures put women on the secondary position in society in the manner they are treated and accommodated by their societies. Thus it is no surprise that even the texts do not put much value on women.

Lauretis (1987) uses the terms male and female with reference to culture and states:

Cultural conceptions of male and female as two complementary yet mutually exclusive categories into which all human beings are placed constitute within each culture a gender system, a system of meanings that correlates sex to cultural contents according to social values and hierarchies (Lauretis 1987).

According to Lauretis (1987) cultural construction of sex into gender and the asymmetry that characterizes all gender systems cross-culturally are understood as “systematically linked to the organization of social inequalities”. The sex-gender system is a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning to individuals within the society (Lauretis 1987). For radical feminists, the very division between nature and culture, public and private, is at the heart of gender which needed to be transformed: this was the source of women’s subordination (Lynn, 2006). While patriarchy is generally referred to as law of the father, Millet views it as male domination in an institutional as well as cultural sense. To Millet patriarchal societies are ones wherein, if examined closely, men held positions of power in virtually all decision-making spheres.

Within patriarchal societies culture plays an encompassing function which is controlled by men. Peterson cited in Griswold (1994) has observed that when people talk about culture they usually mean one of four things: norms, values, beliefs or expressive symbols. In brief, norms are the way people behave in a given society, values are what they hold dear, beliefs are how they think the universe operates, and expressive symbols are representations - often representations of social norms, values and beliefs themselves (Griswold, 1994). She claims therefore that there is no such thing as “culture” or “society” out there in the world. There are only people who work, joke, raise children, love, think, worship and behave in a wide variety of ways (Griswold, 1994). Griswold maintains that culture designates the expressive aspect of

human existence, whereas society designates the relational aspect. In dealing or addressing the behaviour of women and men within the Zulu culture, therefore, the study looks at the expressive side of human life behavior, objects and ideas that can be seen to express, to stand for, something else.

Griswold states that culture is the mirror of social reality thus the meaning of a particular cultural object lies in the social structures and patterns it reflects (Griswold, 1994). Structures like a family, for instance, are institutions where society mirrors its application of cultural manifestations. I am concerned with the issue of cultural principles in that they afford men a powerful position in society and specifically in the family. It is within family situations that hierarchies of power are generated and in turn fixed to our society. Basing this argument on the stories under discussion, the representation of male and female characters in specific gender roles may be fixed to expected cultural behaviour.

Moore (1994) in her work of, *Gender and Sexual Difference* addresses the question of differentiation between 'men' and 'women' by analysing gender symbolism cross-culturally. Ortner (1989 cited in Moore 1994) questions the value placed by all cultures upon women and men. In addition, Ortner (1989 cited in Moore 1994) detects an imbalance that must be derived from cultural factors since it does not have any biological origin. Her argument is based on the fact that all cultures place a lower value upon women than men. Ortner argues that such cultural factors must be connected with something that is devalued in every culture. "Nature" fits this bill, since human beings everywhere rank their own cultural products above the realm of the physical world (1989 cited in Moore 1994). She hypothesizes that women tend to

be identified with nature, men with culture. Ortner (1989 cited in Moore 1994) infers that women's specialized role in production puts them closer to nature.

Within the traditional Zulu culture people are governed by strict codes of honour and rules of etiquette (Elliot, 1978). Elliot states that the Zulu live under a patriarchal system. That is, the head of the family is supreme in his authority at home and firmly governs the members of his kraal. Such a household often includes the families of his married sons and perhaps even those of some other dependent relatives in addition to his wives and children (Elliot, 1978). A number of families in the Zulu culture, however, do not have this kind of set-up as defined by Elliot. With the growing transformation and the demand for work most families develop into small cluster families comprising of the mother, father and their children.

The womenfolk do however, have their say in the home itself. Domestic affairs like the organizing of food and the care of small children are women's 'things' and too trivial for men to be bothered with'. The style of living nowadays demands that each household has a helper who assists with domestic chores. Therefore Elliot's view of Zulu women's role may be accepted only if it states women and not a housewife. Gender-based differences in the realms that women traditionally occupy also explain their over-representation in the private sphere and the demeaning social status they have historically been accorded (Lynn, et al, 2006). The older children, especially the sons, are disciplined by their fathers who are not usually too strict about trivial matters and natural wildness but are severe in their punishment of irregular behaviour like stealing (Elliot, 1978).

In his kraal the father's word is law. Once in a while, however, a strong-willed wife does emerge and she sometimes challenges him and gets her own way, but this is rather the exception than the rule; such a wife may just as easily end up with a beating for trouble. The Zulu cherishes and protects his own home jealously. It is his private kingdom and no matter how hospitable he may be to any traveller passing by or kind to any stranger in need of help, no one takes any liberties in his kraal. Zulu men regard themselves as the superior sex. As head of the home, a man is paid respect by everyone at home. He is continuously honored, not only by his wife, but by his daughters and daughters-in-law and other women in the kraal (Briant 1949).

Ortner's (cited in Cameron, 1990) assertion concurs with Elliot's (1978) statement that in Zulu culture women hold a subordinate position. Elliot (1978) states that from early childhood, girls are taught to obey men and show them great respect. A girl is expected to behave according to the rules laid down by her father and later by her husband, Ortner observes. This statement clearly reveals the subjection of women in society in general and within Zulu culture in particular. They "live for others not for themselves" (Elliot, 1978). Elliot further states that men occupy a superior position in society in making laws that guide women's way of living. How is it possible that women's lives are geared by the hands of men, who do not want to fitter in women's lives as their equals but as their superiors?

Kessler (1976) affirms Elliot's point about women's subordination and concurs that women have been encultured to avoid competition with men and to take satisfaction in their roles as wives and mothers. She further points to marriage as an institution that needs to be questioned in terms of economical and emotional advantages



measured against the loss of freedom and assumption of obligations. Many women have found marriage wanting. According to Elliot (1976) marriage is a cultural invention, conceived by the human species as an adaptation to its own particular needs. It is not the fulfillment of a romantic dream as it is so often portrayed in our society, but is a powerful, cultural invention created for very specific purposes. The institution of marriage is a public one. The two plays selected for this study reflect this situation in the representation of characters in *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* when presented in a marriage setting.

Within the marriage setting where acts pertaining to the Zulu culture are practiced, Bryant (1949) states that about fifty years ago females, wives as well as daughters, were by law always minors, and were inheritable belongings. They formed part of property as they are raised to become good wives who were later inherited by in-laws through lobola. They had no right to dispose at will of their own persons or powers, whatever their status or their age. This culture clarifies the inferior treatment that women receive in general and in the Zulu culture in particular. Bryant (1949) maintains that women could not inherit nor bequeath any goods in Zulu society. They were nevertheless permitted to possess goods and bestow minor personal goods. Offspring as well as wife belonged to the husband or father, and descent was reckoned through him (Bryant, 1949). Bryant (1949) states that women in the Zulu culture were belongings of men and they were never independent but owe their control to men who are in authority of women's possessions.

Wrinch-Schulz (1975) states that women have been the labour force in the Zulu clan for a very long period. Amongst the work that they do is to hoe the land, sow the

fields, weed, reap the harvest, thresh ground, prepare and cook all sorts of traditional food. Nowadays, however not many women still engage in such activities. Today communities provide wide job opportunities and training which in turn empowers and uplifts women to entrepreneurial positions. Nevertheless, there is still a wide gap between male and female workwise. For example, almost all the domestic work continues to be the sole responsibility of women today. If some are doing other work as suggested by Wrinch-Schulz (1975), it is supposedly through the community projects that women are involved in and as a way of earning income. Division of labour, therefore does exist and varies from one society to another, as does the rigidity with which such divisions are held (Basow, 1992).

Derwent (1995) states that raising children has always been the responsibility of women in the Zulu culture. Over and above this reproductive duty, women often undertake rough manual labour such as growing crops to sustain their families. Even the tending of livestock, traditionally a male occupation, becomes the women's responsibility in the absence of their men.

Derwent (1995) posits that traditional Zulu society is strongly patriarchal and many of its cultural practices are geared towards maintaining a man's status as the undisputed head of his household (*umnumzane*) and a figure of authority. Strict social rules govern women's behaviour, and it is a brave or stupid woman who defies accepted norms. From early childhood, girls are taught to defer to men and to show them utmost respect. A girl has to abide by the rules and regulations set down by her father who is undisputed head of the *umuzi* and thus has the final say in his household. As an adult, a woman is similarly bound by decisions made by her husband if she marries,

or by her father or male relative if she is single. Thus women within the Zulu culture are by and large not given an opportunity to be themselves but act under strict rules and supervision of men. Therefore any woman who may be defy to the norms is regarded as either brave or stupid (Derwent, 1995) or even rebellious.

Wrinch-Schulz's (1975) work concurs with that of Derwent's (1995) regarding the authority over women. She states that the bride is taught to respect all males in her house and any house, but as she bears children and gets older, she yields more and more influence in the kraal. Her status is actually enhanced by her husband's additional wives as she has control over them. Msimang (1975) affirms Derwent's point which states that within the Zulu culture, females across the ages have had a much harder job than males. He suggests that the reason for this could have stemmed from the fact that men were involved in warfare most of the time years ago. Msimang (1975) further states that children from an early age are taught work that befits their sex. Boys learn from older boys and their fathers. Similarly, with girls, in that their mothers teach them how to cook, fetch water, clean the house, fetch wood, and many other activities that will make them responsible wives in future.

The role of women and men in Zulu culture is essential for this study as it sheds some light on roles and enables the reader to reflect on such practices presented in both plays. Some roles in the plays may be exaggerated as opposed to their occurrence in reality, however, mirror the culture. This section thus remains a backdrop to the plays under investigation.

Clearly culture does not allow women an opportunity to have a say in things that affect their lives. Patriarchy is mostly pronounced in most societies and women subordination means that women have to succumb to male oppressive rule. Such a perception promotes male supremacy whilst causing much suffering to women's lives. The manner in which women are viewed by culture should be of much concern to writers and feminists. It is under the pretext of culture that women get suppressed and abused and as such fall victim of patriarchal systems. This kind of thinking should come to a stop in our societies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Overview**

This chapter covers relevant literature relating to female and male characters in texts. It addresses gender bias as it manifests itself in gender specific-roles and the implications of this to society at large. Accounts by writers who have done studies that relate to the one under investigation are explored and used to substantiate views. Elements of power, patriarchy, culture and language lie at the centre of this study.

#### **Introduction**

The greater visibility of males in texts plus their more active representation alongside the greater invisibility of females, especially in occupations and in their less active and more caring representation, may model gender differences in behaviour and moral reasoning. This study explores how Ntuli and Mbhele, as authors of the stories under discussion, have represented the portrayal of characters in *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* as presented by the book *Ishashalazi*. Clearly, most texts portray female and male characters in stereotypical roles and male characters tend to predominate. This study investigates to what extent the representation of each character in each play portrays gender imbalances and sexism.

Ncube (2001) conducted a study based on a feminist analysis of Besie Head's work with reference to migration and psychoanalysis. Ncube's study appraises Head's work and describes her as a feminist who has worked her entire life to support women's liberation. Ncube notes that Head's life history is reflected in most of her work and an underlying motivation for Head's writing is transparent to readers. Such instances of transparency in authors' work are not easy to find. Instead authors' texts normally have a general meaning which is easy to recognize and a hidden meaning which is hidden in the authors' representation and context given to characters.

In analyzing the drama series, *Kwakhanyonini*, Msani (1996) states that the text deals at great length with the problems of third world women in particular, the rural women. The author of the series uses both men and women characters and demonstrates their problems, however, Msani's analysis does not explore how the author employs the characters' role and images to relay certain messages. This study intends to interrogate the authors' (Mbhele and Ntuli) character representations in this regard.

Authors' representations can become 'representatives'- those empowered to speak on behalf of their constituency: the authentic voices of a group (Beer, 1990). Characters (male or female) can be understood to represent their constituencies in society. An almost similar approach to that of Ncube (2001) in analyzing the representation of characters was adopted by Zulu (2004). Zulu undertook a study of the post apartheid representation of youth in the novel *Kungasa ngifile* by Sibiyi (2002). In this study Zulu (2004) highlights underlying texts by some black authors who construct characters for the purpose of demonstrating forms of resisting apartheid and other

kinds of domination. Regarding the representation of youth in the novel *Kungasa ngifile*, Zulu (2004) states that youngsters are represented as being under peer group pressure to do the wrong things or to impress others with their wayward behaviour. Zulu (2004) goes on to state that youth is constructed as particularly deviant and deficient in this literary work. This study aims to analyse all characters of the selected drama stories of *Ishashalazi* as they represent their constituencies in real-life situations. The understanding of the authors' stance with regard to the motive for writing the text will explain the way characters and their role have been presented by the authors.

Gumede (2002) conducted a study on the portrayal of female characters by male authors in selected Zulu texts. Gumede (2002) reiterating earlier literary analysts, regards literature as a mirror of society and mold of social attitudes. Furthermore, he holds the view that literature has the task of preparing the way for social re-thinking and therefore for social change. Gumede (2002) states that a text reflects the way people generally think. In emphasizing his point, he maintains that many male writers in most cultures tend to follow stereotypes in their description of women. Gumede's study of selected Zulu texts indicates that some authors on one hand promote patriarchy and on the other hand create women characters that react in a novel way. Instead of focusing on women only as Gumede did, this study will focus on the character representation of both genders.

Joubert's (2004) literary study that includes an analysis of a song of a woman has resonance for this study. It talks about female and male characters and how they impact on each others lives. It further presents women responding to the ideal

tradition that is overshadowed by the traditional suffering ideal of womanhood. The story is about a Lobedu woman (Mamolato) whose song is the expression of her feelings. In analyzing Mamolato's life Joubert (2004) points out that the position of men in women's lives is magnified. The analysis reveals the meaning of the song's words; for example, the lust women have for their husbands, the dependency of women in all respects on men, etc. As in most African communities, Joubert (2004) maintains that in the Lobedu area women are keepers of tradition in terms of dress, customs, the manufacturing of material culture and oral art. They are even keepers of traditions that demean women.

Ntuli (2006) conducted a study on the significant role of minor characters in selected isiZulu plays. He maintains that the study of minor characters is of utmost importance as they give the reader an indication of human behavior in real life. Ntuli (2006) rightly states that neglecting minor characters over main characters results in incomplete analysis. Taking into consideration Ntuli's warning and in line with the objectives of the study, this research will study all characters regardless of their importance in the plays.

Zulu (2004) explores gender relations in two Sesotho novels by Mafata. His study aims to establish the attributes culturally ascribed to women and men as 'textual people'. In his analysis Zulu (2004: 147) asserts that character portrayal in the studied Sesotho novels show that female and male characters are predominantly seen in terms of gender stereotypes in a male-dominated society. He views culture in the context of patriarchy, which influences the way women and men are portrayed in texts. He posits that the author's apparent intention (with the exaggerated images of female and male



characters in the novels) could be an attempt to challenge the cultural stereotypes of a good Mosotho woman. He says in the two novels women's character portrayal reduces the focus of the reader to the perception of women as trouble makers, mean, selfish and always becoming a burden to men who rescue and have to make right (Zulu, 2004). In his account of the portrayal of female and male characters in texts he sees both female and male characters, as literary characters, presented as cultural stereotypes in the sense that they stand for patriarchal ideas that exist in the form of categories in the minds of readers. Male and female characters are characterized as representatives of their gender groups, and their behavior is somewhat similar and expected. The works of Zulu (2004) and Joubert (2004) is important for this study as both studies are about the portrayal of the cultural position held by women and men in society. In some cultures (e.g. Sesotho and Zulu), as confirmed by the two authors, women hold a secondary position to that of men who are regarded as heads of families and in authority in society.

Affirming the point of negative representation of women characters in texts, Dudu, Gonye, Mareva and Sibanda (2008) examine the extent to which English textbooks currently used in Zimbabwean schools are gender insensitive. The focus here is on textbooks as basic carriers of sexist content. Dudu, et al. (2008) state that there is a small body of literature with obvious representation of females in textbooks in Africa and in Zimbabwe. All agree that women are represented from a male perspective, that they are generally under-represented and that there is a preponderance of male characters. Textbooks in Zimbabwe are dominated by male characters. This study looks at the gender of the author and argues that it has an impact on the representation

of characters. Most male-authored texts present women negatively and men's roles mostly represent men's heroism.

Experiences as women and men can be traced from deep within their pasts and related within the deepest structures of unconscious meaning and most emotionally relationships that constitute their daily lives (Chodorow, 1989: 2). Chodorow makes clear distinctions about where the selves of women and men tend to be constructed. According to Chodorow (1989) women's self is more in relation and involved with boundary negotiations, separation and connection. Chodorow's claim explains the reason why there is a trend that is usually employed in representing female characters in texts. In most texts female characters are represented in roles that are mostly feminine and do not depict women as triumphant characters. In texts women are often glamorous assistants to male heroes and thus people to fall in love with. Powerful or ambitious women are often portrayed as evil characters. Chodorow (1989) states that men's self is more distanced and based on defensively firm boundaries and denials of self-other connections. It is therefore essential that when trying to make meaning of the manner in which male and female are viewed in society, and specifically in texts, one has to look deep into one's unconscious reasoning as well as into the relationships that constitute ones daily lives as advised by Chodorow. This study thus embarks on understanding such day to day relationships in one's life in order to make meaning of the boundaries that separate society into male and female.

Basow (1992) states that textbooks portray female and male characters in stereotypic roles and male characters tend to dominate. Snow (cited in Basow, 1992) states that books written by men tend to present women as either pure or evil, Madonna or

whore/bitch (Snow 1975). Some texts present women as failures who thus spend the rest of their lives dependent on men to bring meaning to their lives. In so doing men are portrayed as heroes who save the women's life when trapped in her life. Where women have authority she is either represented as helpless or foolish. In taking Snow's argument further, Modleski (cited in Basow 1992) states that texts in many ways reveal the contradictions in women's lives under patriarchy (Modleski, 1982). On the other hand, themes of aggression predominate, and if females are presented, they are usually cast in a stereotyped sexual role (Weitz, 1977 cited in Basow, 1992). Based on the information given by different authors above, it can be assumed that in textbooks, and other forms of media, gender stereotypes are conveyed often in a most exaggerated way. Basow makes a strong point regarding media. She posits that:

Media is the most pervasive and most powerful of all the sources of gender stereotypes. They communicate messages about set roles that are far from subtle. Females and males are presented for the most part, in stereotyped ways, and usually with deviations from the stereotypes depicted negatively (Basow, 1992, p. 157).

Basow (1992) states that since media both reflect and shape society it is also influential especially to young children who cannot clearly differentiate fantasy from reality. Drawing from the presentation of the representation of characters in *Ishashalazi* and in line with the objectives of this study, this research will explore the question of whether or not the plays *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*, resist or reinforce gender imbalances and sexism in the manner characters are presented.

In establishing facts from fiction, Bopape (2006) conducted a study on a historical biographical analysis of the historical drama, *Kgasane*, by Makwela. Bopape's work links to this study mainly because of its focus on analysis and the manner in which he

has tried to establish facts out of fictional information. Bopape analyses a drama that is based on a true story. An interesting part of Bopape's analysis is the way she follows links between textual information and facts. Throughout she verifies information from the text against information from primary sources - people with first hand-information. Bopape (2006) is skeptical of believing everything in the text.

While this is not a comparative study of fact and fiction, Bopape's account (2006) serves to caution one about the danger of texts having the potential to communicate information and in so doing sending incorrect messages to readers. These messages are in turn fixed and accepted as the norm in that society. Supporting evidence to the above statement is confirmed by Basow. Basow (1992) states that the terms sex and gender are used interchangeably but they differ in important ways. According to her, sex is a biological term; people are termed either male or female depending on their sex organs or genes. Gender on the contrary is a psychological and cultural term, referring to one's subjective feelings of maleness or femaleness (gender identity). Gender may also refer to society's evaluation of behaviour as masculine or feminine (gender roles). Basow (1992) states that behavioral and personality differences between males and females are deemed to be actually due to sex differences by some people. She argues that behavioral and personality differences are due to social factors such as socialization practices, social rewards, status variables, and observer expectations.

Unger states that:

In psychology of sex and gender, maleness and femaleness are viewed largely as social construct that are confirmed by sex characteristic styles of self-representation and differential distribution of females and males into different social roles and statuses and maintained by intra-psychic needs for self consistency and the need to behave in a socially desirable manner (Unger, 1989 cited in Basow, 1992: 17).

Thus gender is constructed by people, not by biology, and this construction is shaped by historical, cultural and psychological processes. In line with Unger's (1989) view about gender, feminist theorists such as Millet and de Beauvoir 1980 assert that women are dominated, not only politically and economically, but also sexually, physically and in nearly every field of artistic or intellectual endeavor and philosophical thought. de Beauvoir (1980) argues that gender differences are not rooted in biology rather they are artificial constructs that work to reinforce women's oppression. "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman...; it is civilization as a whole which is described as feminine" (de Beauvoir 1980). She also argues that historical and contemporary constructions of gender treat masculinity as positive norm and femininity as a deviation from the masculine ideal - thus making women the "other" or the "second sex". Drawing from the work of Basow's Gender roles and stereotypes and linking it with Beauvior's assertion of the second sex, this study investigates the representation of characters in the selected stories regarding the implication of domination of one gender over the other and to what extent this behaviour is prevalent.

When gender stereotype is exercised, it tends to be inseparable from gender bias. McDonald (2001) undertakes a study on sex bias in the representation of male and female characters in children's picture books. He uses content analysis as an investigatory method of his study. McDonald (2001) states that there are significant differences in the representation of male and female characters in the sample of children's picture books published in the years 1976 through to 1987. According to McDonald's findings, male characters outnumbered female characters, were given the majority of central character roles, and were more likely to be the recipients of help.

In addition, he states that male characters helped other male characters more than they helped female characters, and male helping behavior tended to be instrumental rather than expressive. This is a behaviour that is very prominent in the stories under investigation here. Characters in this regard appear in some sort of power struggle where the winner is, predictably a man. According to McDonald, female characters are frequently presented in a limited number of stereotyped roles, whereas male characters were presented in a wide variety of roles (McDonald, 2001). McDonald's accounts may have been influenced by many factors such as the fact that males have received preferential treatment in society by virtue of being male thus widening the gap between the female's private sphere and the male's public sphere. It calls for feminists therefore to bridge this gap by exposing such practices, as is done by this study.

Concurring with McDonald's inference above is the study that examines the extent to which textbooks currently used in Zimbabwean schools are gender sensitive. Dudu, Gonye, Mareva and Sibanda, (2008) state that women are largely invisible in texts, as manifested by the titles of passages, pictures and illustrations, extracts of passages and poems-in all of which male perspective is dominant. Where women featured, they were, in most cases, portrayed negatively. Dudu, et.al. (2008) all give the area of gender stereotyping a superficial examination and spotted on the imbalance of equity and equality between the sexes. This imbalance reflects in gender stereotyping. This implies that women are represented from a male perspective and most of the time they are in minor roles or negatively represented. These attributes are mostly portrayed in texts and subsequently copied and accepted as the norm. I believe that this norm largely perpetuates gender inequality and patriarchy through texts, and why is that

almost everything that is regarded as the norm reflects a male gender bias. This study examines the stories under investigation to see whether they have lineage to this claim and discloses it as a way of changing such practices.

McDonald (2001) states the development of an appropriate sex role identity is an important component of a healthy personality. It occurs early in life and influences the evolution of future behaviors and experiences. McDonald warns though, that personality characteristics associated only with a particular sex role, may limit a person's social mobility, for sex stereotyping frequently produces rigid, black-and-white conceptualizations of the appropriate abilities and behaviors for men and women. Sex role stereotypes are still present and still produce negative consequences, especially for women. The attributes and functions frequently assigned to the feminine role are less valued than those attributed to the masculine role.

Basow (1992) states that power differential components of gender construction in western culture, that is, the sexes are not viewed simply as different from each other, but as superior or inferior, dominant or subordinate. She maintains effects of gender stereotypes and roles are pervasive, intense, and generally damaging to all individuals, to their relationships, and to society as a whole. "Gender encodes inequality" (Basow 1992.vii). Basow states, according to a survey, that gender stratification (male dominance) and a division of labour between the sexes are almost universal. Therefore it stands to reason to say that women subordination is firstly a universal issue before it manifest in different societies. A man's having a higher-status than women in terms of power and prestige is a nearly universal occurrence in the world today. Basow (1992) states that even in places where women hold what is known to

most as high-status jobs, their actual status is low. Relating de Beauvoir's contention to this study, there is a connection as the stories of *Ishashalazi* show features of gender inequality in terms of jobs and power distribution within the marriage institution in society and in the bigger cultural setting.

The position currently held by most women in society is not because of their lack of competence or potential, it is, as Ortner (1974) puts it, related to male dominance and the division of labour. She believes that cultures tend to put a higher value on things they can control. Thus all activities that are regulated by humans (for example, hunting) are viewed by culture as more valuable than all activities regulated by nature (for example, childbirth). Because women, by virtue of their reproductive functions, appear more controlled by nature than by culture, their work and their status become devalued. Men, who do not seem as subjects to natural forces as do women, are considered to be more in control of themselves, therefore, they and their activities become more highly valued in culture.

de Beauvoir (1980) takes the issue of male domination and female subordination further by making a distinction between women and men. She asserts that man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general, whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity. de Beauvoir (1980) states that a man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong. Thus being a woman is not in accordance with what is acceptable. She further maintains that the nature of women – with her ovaries and uterus – is imprisoned by this; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity and circumscribe her within the limits of



her own nature. Within the traditional setting of the stories of *Ishashalazi* it is evident that there is no balance of power in terms of the decision-making and recognizance across genders of all ages and this study aims at disclosing the reasons that underpin such gender imbalances. Basow (1992) asserts that gender is socially-constructed and that messages about gender and gender-appropriate behavior can be found everywhere – in our language, school, religion and media, to mention a few. Basow maintains that of all social forces, language is perhaps the most subtle. From the moment a child begins to understand the spoken word, she or he also begins to receive messages about the way society views the sexes. Language plays a major role in defining and maintaining male power over women. Sexism in the English language takes major forms, amongst others are ignoring and stereotyping (Henley, 1989; Lakoff, 1975, 1990; Thorne, Kramarae and Henley, 1983: 141).

Zondi (2006) critiques an ideology indoctrinated into society by the *izimbongi* (traditional bards). She draws from the work of Morris (1965) she states that the work of *izimbongi* is prompted by scholars who embrace the notion within patriarchal societies that women are inferior. Anderson and Zinsser (1988, xiv; cited in Zondi, 2006) holds a view that negative cultural traditions have proved the most powerful and most resistant to change among the many factors which have limited women's lives.

Employing a feminist framework Zondi (2006) focuses her study on the concern for the common commitment to the course of objection against conventional male and female role designation in society. Zondi's (2006) work concurs with this study in that her analysis is based on male writers, as this study does. Similarly to this study, she

states vividly how culture, in particular, marginalizes women by its obligations. However, Zondi's (2006) work is based on oral literature critiquing the male writers of female *izibongo* (traditional bards) with regards to the two royal women: Nandi, king Shaka's mother and Mkabayi, his paternal aunt.

Zondi (2006) asserts that current writings of the *izibongo* she studies seem to be distorted and biased as they allegedly suggest only negative connotations of the royal women being examined. In her analysis Zondi (2006) clarifies and makes a distinction between the status of women and men within the Zulu monarchy. She asserts that as in other nations, women, regardless of the position and influence they have, receive the same treatment as ordinary women within the kingdom. It is clear from Zondi's assertion that in most cases women within the Zulu culture are devalued even when they deserve recognition because of the positions they hold in a community. Contrary to Zondi's claim in this very Zulu culture, women are slowly but surely being valued for their prominent positions in society. My statement however, above does not give a ruling about all Zulu women. There are still instances where women live under oppressive structures of cultural manifestations, as for example, being domesticated.

Motseli (2006) explores ways in which women receive treatment in society. Basing her argument on the reflections on the rape trial of Jacob Zuma, (the president of the ruling party, African National Congress) she argues that society has a particular way of treating women. She posits most countries including Africa and Asia that share a strong preference for boys, in that value sons more. She draws from Bible stories about men and their sons as the best illustrations of this preference. For example, women had to make sure that they gave birth to sons for their husbands. In Genesis,

two sisters, Leah and Rachel, fought to give their husband, Jacob, a troop of boys. Whilst Leah managed to give birth to four sons her sister, Rachel could not conceive and had to give her maid, Bihah, to Jacob to produce sons (Motseli 2006). What could be so wrong with women that they deserved ill treatment in almost all societies?

Corbin's (1984) assertion explains why societies oppress women in almost every sector of life. Corbin states that women's history is like an echo, perceived with the help of a whole range of male data, despite the efforts of historians (both men and women) to seek out women's words more directly. Almost all the documents in the public archives are written by men in positions of responsibility. Corbin touches on an important factor which he claims underpins the current status of women in society as well as their representation, fear: Corbin (1984) states that fear of women has grown over the decades and is witnessed in the systems of representation that govern male language and behaviour.

Motseli's (2006) assertion holds true for *Ishashalazi* in this study when he claims that the preference for boys is founded on the principle and belief that a man heads and provides for the family. He further claims that sons as future men represent economic security for their parents and extended families. While daughters help with domestic chores, their contribution is not valued due to its reproductive and not economically productive nature. Motseli's claim emphasizes the fact of inequality in society across gender which subsequently emerged as a norm. Further, women do not live their lives freely but as they engage in their life journey they have to make men's life easy. As affirmed by stories from the Bible and under the pretext of culture, women are taught that men are valuable members of society as it is only men who bring joy if they are

given birth to. Women, therefore, under pressure try hard to be in line with culture even in situations which can jeopardize their lives.

In support of Motseli's claim, Ngonyama (2008) concurs by asserting that culture and tradition are used to deny women their rights and to justify treating them with disdain. Ngonyama gives a narration of incidents where women are either marginalized or suffer victim of abuse by virtue of being women. At the top of the list is the popular '*Reed Dance*' festival that has been criticised by gender and human rights activists for its insistence of 'virginity testing'. Ngonyama (2008) claims virginity testing is a dehumanizing practice and states that society, mainly men, maintain it is a cultural African "high ground".

A woman in the T section of Umlazi Township, south of Durban, was stripped in public for wearing trousers. It was argued that it was done according to "our culture"; in this instance, the Zulu culture; women are prohibited from wearing trousers. Ngonyama (2008) states that a clear endorsement of this factually-inaccurate belief was made by the organizers of the "Reed Dance" in their request that women coming to the event not wear trousers as it was seen as disrespectful, particularly as the traditional leaders expected to attend. These are some of the instances where culture is used in order to serve the purposes of different individuals at the expense of women. Most cultural prescriptions either restrict orders or prohibit women from doing something. This practice in turn creates a gender bar in relation to roles. As a focus of this study roles are looked at if they are differentially assigned to genders.

In Swaziland, Africa's only remaining monarchy, Manzini, in 2004, an eighteen year old high school learner was publicly gang raped by bus drivers who contended she invited it herself by having worn an 'inciting' garment (Ngonyama, 2008). According to Ngonyama the bus drivers, also invoking the 'cultural flag', vowed to do the same to other women passengers wearing mini skirts. Jacob Zuma in his well-publicized rape trial used the words of the buss drivers when, giving his testimony, he argued that the '*kanga*' worn by the woman accusing him of rape, was a 'dead giveaway'. She had visited his house looking for 'action'.

Culture and tradition have been occasionally used as a weapon to legitimize suppression of women, yet the question still remains: For how long are women going to fall victim of exploitation at the pretext of culture. It is high time that feminist, and woman in particular, set records straight by mobilizing against unjust representation whether in public, text or any form. Our society has been socialized into believing that only men can "achieve big" in life, if a woman achieves it is met with uncertainties or criticism which mean that even the texts women read do not represent them in their trueness.

Our society is persistently under the pressures of disguised women discrimination owing to their successes that pose a threat to the power of men. Just recently in South Africa a young woman, Caster Semenya suffered gender discrimination at it highest level. Owing to her 'masculine' look she unknowingly underwent a sex test by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) on the basis that they raised 'doubts about her sex' (Molobi and Ncube, 2009). Semenya is an 800 meters runner

who has excelled at international level. Her physique, which socially resembles that of a man has caused her victimization.

My concern in the Semenya saga is clearly not on the basis of how her case was handled or who is to blame. It is the victimization she has endured and continues to suffer because her society questions her gender because she does not possess 'woman' looks. This is discrimination at its highest point. Surely, as human beings we do not have control over the choice of our parental genes for the make up of our appearances. I am concerned about society's position on this matter and the position of Semenya in particular. Do we really have a bipolar society or does our society fine-tune our perception of what makes a woman or a man? This form of discrimination should be stopped and feminists need to critique such discrimination through texts to bring about change. Fairclough (2003) maintains that as social elements of events, texts bring about change. As feminists we have to use texts to change knowledge, our beliefs, our attitudes and values. Texts should not only be used to sell the ideas of male supremacy as is the case in the two stories that are analysed in this study.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented related literature to this study. Most of the content of this literature touches on the issues of culture and patriarchy which have a tendency to create fixed perceptions to society. The representation of characters in texts is largely shadowed by cultural beliefs which have a strong leaning towards patriarchy and its implications. This practice is largely portrayed in textual form. The issue of women in subordinate positions in textual representation through cultural taboos, sexist language, and the roles that are modeled by female characters clearly shows that male and female characters are not represented in the same manner in texts and this in turn is modelled to society and preserved through language for generations to come.

This chapter has also shown that characters in texts are assigned to gender-specific roles which in turn create perceptions that we are living in a dual world. Characters either play male roles or female roles. There is no possibility that characters cannot fall under the two. It also generates the influence of boundaries between gender roles. Men largely have masculine roles while women have feminine roles.

Different accounts of authors show the role played by language in controlling or dominating in society. The use of language is mostly gendered and supports one gender over the other. It is through the element of language that women are oppressed and denied their rights in society under the pretext of culture. Generally all women are placed in the private sphere of the family thus engaging in roles that are commonly associated with them.

With all the information gathered in this study, it remains the duty of feminists to see to it that women are viewed not merely as reproductive machines that are only good for the domestic chores but rather as beings equal to men in every respect. This will have to begin with women; women viewing themselves as equally important to men but physiologically different. This perception can be initiated within settings where women demonstrate equality and balance and equity in their children.



## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

This chapter presents theories that lay a fundamental background to this study. These theories help to substantiate the discussion and analysis as well as form grounds upon which to support arguments. Theories act as a form of fountain of knowledge from which all the chapters continuously drink frames of reference. This chapter does not have a specific author for the theory; instead it builds on different accounts of authors under the umbrella of feminist and representation theories.

#### Introduction

In this chapter I address issues of inequality as they appear in gender-specific roles that our society promotes and preserve in textual forms. This analysis sees such categories of difference and inequality as mutually constitutive. The study aims to analyze the representation of characters as represented in *Ishashalazi* using the theory of feminist textual analysis and the theory of representation of character. According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2003) feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms. It is the intention of this work to cast light on the injustices texts render in representing female characters which in turn will set a trait to both feminists and readers of emancipating women images represented by texts. The analysis of text

in this study is viewed with a feminist lance in terms of representation, gender inequality, stereotypes and gender roles pertaining to the issues emanating from cultural manifestations and linkage to the gender of the author.

This study is largely informed by the feminist theory, and intends to reveal and challenge discrimination of any form against the representation of women characters in *Ishashalazi*. According to Locks (1984 cited in Unger and Crawford, 2004) feminism is a movement to end sexism and sexist oppression. This study reveals that these forms of oppression are mostly to the detriment of women. The representation of characters is mostly overshadowed by cultural manifestations of society and usually negatively represents women's roles in texts. Nayar (2006) defines representation as the norms of meaning-generating practices. He asserts that representation is linked to power, the practices of ideological domination and selective marginalization. According to Nayar (2006) representations derive their common base of understanding from larger cultural ideas regarding women and minorities. Character representation is thus not looked at, at face value but it is looked at as having linkages with culturally-held opinions about women which usually turn out to be stereotypic. Texts depicting women in conjunction with specific roles reflect a cultural condition where women's characters and roles are both objects to be possessed and controlled by aggressive masculine power (Nayar, 2006). Most texts model situations where males dominate and control women under the pretext of culture. Drawing on Nayar's account, and in line with feminists' principles, this study analyses representation of both male and female characters in texts. As Mills, (1995) puts it, close analysis may help the reader to become aware of the way that language choices may serve the interests of some people to the detriment of others. Feminist

analysis aims to draw attention to and change the way that gender is represented. It is clear that a great many of these representational practices are not in the interest of either women or men (Mills, 1995); and one way of effecting change is through reading.

Culidi (1995) defines representation in two levels: on the first level he states we do not have access to and comprise mental representation. Reality is conceptualised, imagined, reviewed and we do not have access to these mental representations other than through our actions including our speech – our language activities (Culidi, 1995). According to Culidi language is an essential phenomenon in effecting representation, and this study challenges the manner in which language is used in representing characters in *Ishashalazi* and argues that it is sexist. The second level of representation, according to Culidi (1995), is defined as text. Texts have some relationship with mental representations but have no specification about the nature of relationship (Culidi, 1995). Language and text are common features in the representation of characters hence a call for scrutiny of these features. As a way to communicate knowledge language is one of the means that is used and as such may turn out to be biased. Texts as products of speaking or writing are not value-free and on this basis are equally in need of analysis.

Whenever talk is represented, it is re-presented, that is, someone has re-worked it (Carter, Gddard and Reah, 1997). As soon as this happens, effects which are the result of the authors viewpoint and intentions come in to play. Carter, et al. (1997) state that the intentions may be conscious where an individual belongs to a certain social group within the larger culture. Through representation learning a particular set of beliefs

becomes part of their socialization process (Carter, et al. 1997). Social group membership is particularly important when it comes to looking at the representation of talk and it is such membership that this study is challenging.

The use of language is one of the ways in which we/ (people) mark out our social groups and we all have strong attitudes towards the social groups (Carter, et, al. 1997). These authors infer that social membership holds a strong bond between talk and representation since it is through this talk that characters communicate their representation and in the process displaying their social affiliation. This study looks at the social membership of the author in relation to the manner in which male and female characters are represented; the study challenge inequality as a form of discrimination against a particular social group.

Feminist analysis of text assumes “women” as an unproblematic category through the definitions already produced in society – as a mother, housewife, worker and sexual partner as reflected in texts. Women are taken as inscribed in a particular position as women, which then determines all representations of women (Adams and Cowie 1990). It is such forms of representation that are commonly taken as the norm thus obscuring the very important fact and that is of oppression of women. The people who have had the opportunity to get their ideas into print and on to the screen have traditionally belonged to the more powerful groups - men. Men belong to the public sphere which allows them to explore many different opportunities in the outside world. This access has for long not been part of women’ world and this explains their representation in domestic roles. This however, does not mean women are not good enough for the positions traditionally owned by men but they have not been given the

opportunity. Any representation constructed by more powerful social groups can stand unchallenged as truth. This study looks at the representation of women in particular as it is underpinned by forces of oppression - male domination and power and challenges such practices as patriarchy.

Texts appear to play a crucial role in the exercise of power (Van Dijk, 2008). Van Dijk (2008) defines power in terms of control of one group over the members of another group. We witness this mostly in texts' representation of women characters under the control of male power. Van Dijk (2008) states that power may also be manifested more indirectly in discourse, as representation in the form of an expression, description or legitimization of powerful actors or their actions and ideologies. Discursive power is often directly or indirectly persuasive while other rhetorical means that enhance the probability that recipients build desired mental representations (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 63). My concern in this study is the manner in which power persuades the powerless so that wanted actions are in their own interests. Such power is commonly not questioned since it is represented in such a manner that it is legitimized by the context of , seeking answers as to why women have to be held accountable for the misbehaviour of their children.

In order to be able to manipulate many others through texts, one needs to have access to some form of public discourse, such as parliamentary debates, news, opinion articles, textbooks and many more (Van Dijk, 2008). This access and control depends on and constitutes the power of a group. Presumably such control has for a long time been the monopoly of males. In making sense out of this, it would then be impossible for the oppressed to have any form of influence on the territory they do not own.

Texts are no exception in this regard. Most texts are authored by males and thus represent their ideology as they appear to legitimize character roles. In a way texts become a means through which social control and duplication of ideologies is maintained.

Humm (1994) stresses the fact that literature read with a feminist eye should show, firstly, that since women's social reality, like men's social reality, is shaped by gender; the representation of female experience in literary form is gendered. Secondly representations of women in literature, while not depicting innate characteristics of actual women, might disrupt the traditional symbolic order or language system of patriarchy. While condoning openness of literary form as being gendered, Humm (1994) also expresses the view that women do not receive their true representation in texts. This study does not rest on the assumption that information from texts is reflexive of reality but intends to go as far as disrupting the traditional symbolic order in analyzing how characters are represented in *Ishashalazi*.

Feminist writers like de Beauvoir and Millet (2003) argue that literature is as important a means of patriarchal power as the family. de Beauvoir questions women's otherness in texts written by men. Such ideology is then copied by society and accepted as true. These perceptions are in turn assimilated and fixed in the minds of the readers. Humm (1994) points to literature as having a correspondence with the workings of patriarchy. She maintains that texts, are taken to be models of patriarchal power. Referring to the work of some feminist writers (de Beauvoir, Humm) it is prevalent that the status of women is sexually-determined in texts. de Beauvoir (1945) argues that our society sets up man as the positive and woman as the negative second

sex or other. She asserts that all aspects of social life and thinking are dominated by the vision of woman as other. With reference to de Beauvoir's assertion this study will make inferences that change is due for the thinking and actions of society.

Coupled with representation is stereotyping - both powerful cultural agents of domination. Stereotyping is most common in the manner we communicate. Our language employs stereotyping as it is in association with societal expectations. Stereotypes 'order' the world through particular categorizations of persons. Nayar (2006) maintains that the stereotype maintains sharp boundaries, and also renders the "Other" to a set of unchanging attributes. Most texts present women as "the other" in turn anticipate that as a universal belief.

Jerry (1995) defines gender inequality as referring to the obvious or hidden disparity between individuals due to gender. Gender is constructed both socially through social interactions as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences (Jerry, 1995). Both definitions relate to this study as issues dealt with in both *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* encompass their meaning. Characters are first belonging to a specific gender within a family which in turn forms part of the greater society. Society promotes gender-specific roles in lineage with its ideological principles. In both stories characters' roles are either male or female-orientated. According to Wollstonecraft, the foundation of morality in all human beings, male or female, is their common possession of the faculty to reason (Wollstonecraft, 1792). Reasoning in this study is viewed as to who are the people in terms of gender that are in a possession to make sounding reasoning. It also focuses on the impact that reasoning has in making a change or getting things done.

Wollstonecraft (1792) argues that women must claim their equality by accepting its unemotional dictates. Thus inequality does not only form social demarcations in terms of superiority and inferiority but it also has devastating effects on the minds and souls of the victims. Such effects leave irreparable scars. In order for women to claim their rights, Wollstonecraft claims they first need to accept that they are oppressed. Such acceptance will fuel the need to free themselves from whichever form of oppression affects them. Thus doing the unexpected as shown in the data analysis chapter, should not be seen as contradictory to the cultural norms but as a women's way of correcting the social system in terms of equality and balance across gender. The dichotomous nature of gender leads to the creation of inequality that manifests itself in numerous dimensions of daily life (Jerry, 1995). Jerry also mentions that if distinctions are made between males and females and differential treatment is meted out to boys and girls then there is a gender inequality. For Jerry there would be no inequality in the first place if we did not have gender. Thus gender has played a role in creating divisions in society according to both biological and social constructions. Rights are therefore due to males as they are accepted as the powerful gender in society. They possess power and they are also the creators of rules that govern society. I argue therefore that men, in order to safeguard their sphere, they have to secure it from their very opposite gender, women while at the process marginalizing and excluding them from the public sphere, which Cameron (1990) describe as men owned.

Gender inequality is mostly exercised in society within families. Family life is traditionally considered to be the most intimate and personal of realms, one that is and should be governed by instinct or emotion (Saul, 2003: 5). She dismisses the claim by



theories of justice that the structure and composition of families is fundamentally a personal and not a political matter. She asserts that it has been thought that the family has nothing to do with political considerations such as justice or injustice (Saul, 2003). Feminists have, however, shown that this sharp division between the political and personal cannot be upheld. According to Saul (2003), families both shape and are shaped by factors that are clearly of political significance. Saul infers that political structures play a key role in disadvantaging women. The family is inescapably political.

Affirming the point of family as a political phenomenon in analyzing power, Bryson (2003) states that in almost all known societies men appear to have more power and privilege than women. The relationship between the sexes is seen as one of inequality, subordination or oppression linked to political power rather than a fact of nature (Bryson, 2003). Affirming the same view, Mill (2003) states that women appear to be in many ways inferior to men, but argue that this is the consequence of social pressure and family education. Bryson's and Mill's account are link to this study as this occurs within the family setting. In both the stories we witness a power struggle between women and men. Noticeably is the manner in which both stories end: The men are victorious. This study aims to demonstrate to readers that our society to date holds on to the perception that women are inferior and this belief is further reinforced in texts.

Mill (2003) states that women must be given the same opportunities as men, and he argues that it will only be then that we will know their true abilities, and only then will society reap the full benefit from the talents of all its members. It is clear that although Mill insists on giving men and women equal political rights and insists that

there must be no bar between the two sexes, in practice he sees the sexes as playing very different roles in society – roles which largely conform to the ideology of separate spheres. Mill (2003) raises an important point for this study and that is that women should not be forced into marriage through economic necessity. In one of the stories we witness a marriage that portrays men power through money and women subordination through culture.

Like inequality, stereotype is the determining factor in the position held by women in society. Lippmann (1922) defines stereotype as a preconceived idea that attributes certain characteristics (in general) to all the members of a class or set. The term is often used with a negative connotation when referring to an over-simplified, exaggerated, or demeaning assumption that a particular individual possesses the characteristics associated with the class due to his or her membership thereof. Stereotypes can be used to deny individuals respect or legitimacy based on their membership of a group. In both the stories we see this phenomenon prevalent. Women are denied respect or input within the families on the basis that they are women, even when their concerns are valid. This is one form of stereotype that negatively affects women.

In defining textual analysis, Lehtonen states that the:

Analysis of text can be thought of as disentangling a weave, or looking into what its symbolic construction is composed of. Analysis is returning to the roots of the texts' symbolic construction, to what it is composed of, and simultaneously withdrawing from the text, detaching from 'the text itself' and going to contextual elements (Lehtonen, 2000:73).

In understanding the manner characters are represented in the two stories the analysis deals not only with the symbolic form of texts but also will dig meaning from the depths of the texts' originality. In so doing the position of the author will be at the focal point . Lehtonen (2000) regards text as both physical and semiotic material. He states that texts are physical beings, but they exist in such forms in order to be semiotic beings (pictorial or sign form). Conversely, texts can be semiotic beings only when they have some physical form. With regard to their physical side we can think of texts as being communicative artifacts; in other words, human-produced instruments of communication (Lehtonen 2000). It is clear from Lehtonen's statement that in order to actualize something, in this instance to make it known, it is best achieved when it is put in textual form as texts are instrumental in communicating messages.

Leaving the author outside the analysis would imply incompleteness. This study regards authors as forming the backbone of texts as they bring flesh and breath to it. Furthermore, authors act as fuel that keeps the engine of ideas in written form running. As we study meaning, Lehtonen (2000) maintains, the figure of the author should be positioned in context. Leaving authors out of the analysis and treat texts as separate entities from authors would mean the opposite of what Lehtonen subscribes to. According to Lehtonen (2000), in addressing the context of the intended aims of the author in writing a text, studying the author's positionality plays a vital role. This work thus brings into close scrutiny the position of authors as they impact most on the content of the texts themselves. The author, therefore (and all that the readers know of her/him) as a party in the formation of meanings does not in actual readings reside in the text but, on the contrary, in the context: the search for the text's own meaning has

largely replaced the hunt for the author's intentions. Texts therefore, do not stand solely by themselves; they stand for the author's intentional purpose. From this angle, attention is paid to the details of the language, the style, and the manner of representation authors in the stories' aim. An attempt is then usually made to abstract some 'text in itself', which would embody the abstract system 'behind text'. The aim is to reveal the universal laws that lie behind text, (Lehtonen 2000). He further states that as semiotic beings, texts are united by certain quite essential factors – they are all representations.

Moi (1985) concurs with Lehtonen (200) that literary studies are concerned with nurturing personal growth and raising the individual consciousness by linking literature to life, particularly to the lived experiences of the reader. Texts such as the ones dealt with in this study usually present a situation that is linked to real life situations. While serving the purpose of passing information, texts also play a role in developing the lives of individuals to desired traits of life. Moi's statement clearly reflect the fact that ideas and beliefs of any author influence the way literature is written. Even in situations where the author addresses a personal biography, the manner in which that is done lies largely in what the author believes and ascribe to in life. There might therefore be a danger of assimilating the beliefs and disbeliefs of authors when we study literature. This fact regarding the personal involvement of the author(s) by inflicting his/her beliefs and ideas is addressed with a close attention lance in this study. This statement infers that texts largely contain ideas and beliefs of authors based on what they have experienced earlier in life.

Beer (1989) takes us through her views and assumptions about representation. She states that representation sustains a needed distance between experience and formulation. It recognizes the fictive in our understanding and allows a gap (space) between how we see things and how, potentially, they might be. Representation acknowledges the extent to which ideologies harden into objects and so sustain themselves as real presence in the world (Beer, 1989). According to Beer's claim, there is a possibility that the universal truths are originally ideologies that exist as real in the world through texts. In arguing this point I infer that there is a possibility that such things as universal truths are non-existent. Universal truths are initially people's-beliefs which in turn are employed as norms through implementation in our daily practices.

Beer states that objects in the form of books, pictures, films, advertisements, fashion and their encoding of assumptions and desires re-inforces as natural and permanent what may be temporary and learnt. Beer maintains that representations shift from being secondary to being primary in their truth claims. Beer's assertion gives a standpoint to this study, in that the manner in which characters are represented may be informed by authors' experience which in turn influences the way characters are presented. She argues that this speedy shift to claiming authority we can all observe, in others' practice and our own. It therefore remains equally appropriate for this study to analyze *Ishashalazi* in terms of claiming universal truths that may well be associated with stereotypes in societal settings. In view of stereotyping, this research focuses on the manner roles are aligned with specific genders and the resultant attitudes.

Foucault (1972) views textual discourse as historically contingent cultural systems of knowledge, beliefs and power. Texts have for a number of years been the territory of men. They have for long dominated the industry of literature thereby influencing the contextualization of its content. This study looks at how the content of *Ishashalazi* is informed by real life-situations. In doing this, it takes the viewing of the representation of characters as being in line with a particular cultural manifestation. How women and men are viewed by society as well as their recognizance is put into focus. Millet (1990) firmly holds the view that the essence of politics is power, and the task of feminist critics is to expose the way in which male dominance over females constitutes 'perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concepts of power'. Millet's claim infers that our culture is biased as it accords power to men over women. When drawing back on Lehtonen's idea of the originality of the author and in line with Millet's view it is highly likely that character representation is biased and in support of the dominant group. This study reveals the fact that politics in society are absent because strong majors like culture having been put in place and make sure that society is unilateral.

Millet (1990) looks at familial power and links it to patriarchy. Patriarchy is derived from a Greek word, patriarchies, meaning 'head of the tribe'. Here supporters of absolute rule claimed that the power of the king over his people was the same as that of a father over his families (Millet, 2003: 166). Millet put the principles of patriarchy as being in twofold: that male shall dominate female and that elder male shall dominate young. This study explores the first principle that is male domination over female. Millet argues that in all known societies, relationships between the sexes have

been based on power, and therefore she claims they are political. She states that this kind of power takes the form of male domination over women in all areas of life.

Millet (2003) states that the patriarchal power of men over women is basic to the functions of all societies and that it extends far beyond formal institutions of power. She infers that sexual politics overrides all other forms of politics such as class or race. Millet (2003) maintains that patriarchy is maintained by a process of conditioning which starts with childhood socialization within the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion. This socialization happens to such an extent that its values are internalized by men and women alike. It does not appear strange, therefore, for most women to sit comfortably in very oppressive relationships within families. It is because they have been socialized to do so. This study shows women's behaviour guided by cultural principles which are the very means through which they are oppressed. Our culture does not permit the superiority of women especially within family settings. That is why stories in this study centre on the weaknesses of women which may lead to self-hatred, self rejection and an acceptance of inferiority.

The concept of patriarchy does not necessarily mean that all individual men oppress all women. It is not that each and every male person is to be considered an enemy incapable of reform, or that the total elimination of the male sex would be the desired consequence of an improvement in sperm-bank technology. Indeed, an important aspect of the concept is that it enables us to distinguish between the structures of male domination on the one hand and individual men on the other, (Dahlerup, 1987 and Walby, 1990-cited in Bryson 2003). Bryson (2003) states that the meaning of this

claim is that the enemy is male power in all its manifestations and that, it makes clear that this power is socially constructed and therefore contestable rather than embodied in all biological males. Millet (2003) points to family as patriarchy's chief institution which is the central part of society's power structure. I base my argument on Millet's claim that it is the sole responsibility of feminists is to address the manner in which texts represent individuals' characters as this practice is modelled by society and assumed as correct.

Millet (2003) infers that family both sustains patriarchal power in the 'public' world and is itself a source of women's oppression. She dismisses the assumption that family is a place of warmth for all the family members. Millet (2003) claims that family is far from being a 'natural' arrangement or individual choice based on mutual love and respect in which the emotional, sexual and domestic needs of adult partners are met and their children cared for. It is a social institution in which women's labour is exploited, where male sexual power may be violently expressed and oppressive gender identities and modes of behaviour are learned. Being a feminist analyst, however, does not imply my intention to disrespect my culture or any individual based on sexual orientation. I am concerned with the manner in which structures in our society like the family marginalization of women, which is simply a pretext for culture.

People establish their identities and their differences through the diverse ways in which they interpret texts, and more generally, incorporate their own practices: a person, for example, cannot talk about something they have read or heard without representing and constructing themselves in some way (Litosseliti and Sunderland,



1994). These authors infer that texts cannot be treated as separate entities or as mere factious and in no way associated with reality. Texts have a major influence on our daily interactions and in some way are represented in questionable ways. These authors rule out the possibility of texts being separate from our day-to-day encounters. Nevertheless, they bring forth the fact that texts have the tendency of being modelled by readers. In analyzing the representation of characters, texts need to be analyzed in terms of addressing the manner they are portrayed.

Fairclough (1995) states that texts are sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change. According to Fairclough texts reflect social interactions and processes. There might, however, be a danger of texts misrepresenting such interactions and processes. It is for this reason that this study engages in interpreting the manner in which social interactions and processes are represented. This study rests upon the representation of female and male characters and it is through the manner characters are represented that this study interprets social interactions and processes.

Texts provide evidence of ongoing processes such as the redefinition of social relationships between professionals and publics, the constitution of social identities, and of self, or the reconstitution of knowledge and ideology (Fairclough, 1995). He maintains that it is through texts that social control and social domination are exercised. In disseminating information and upholding an ideological manifestation, texts are used as reinforcing tools. I therefore infer that Fairclough's assertion implies that texts may have a patriarchal bent and domination. Textual analysis, as part of critical discourse analysis, can therefore be an important political resource in order to

establish critical language awareness. It is the intension of this study to disclose how patriarchy and domination function in language and the implication this has on readers and society at large.

When confronted with text as in the case with *Ishashalazi* our first reaction is largely to assume that meaning is natural and that it offers itself as a whole which cannot be deconstructed (Silverman, 1994). Yet meaning is an “effect”. Silverman maintains that meaning results from the organization of elements less complex than the meaning perceived in reading. Thus, meaning is an effect that one can deconstruct to show how it is built. In looking at the minutest details that form meaning, this study reads with the motive of finding the hidden rules governing its meaning. The structural description of *Ishashalazi* implies the passing over from concrete statements as manifested in the text in a specific language and style, to abstract units capable of being of meaning.

Fairclough (1995) makes mention of two important issues about texts. Firstly, language and, secondly, social control and social domination. The power of language and possibilities it affords in the understanding of social life is important. Language is taken to be not, just simple a tool for description and a medium of communication (the conventional view), but as a social practice, as a way of doing things. It is a social and constitutive feature of social life (Kroger and Wood, 2000). Austin in his theory of speech acts points out that:

A feature of language that is known implicitly by all language users: utterances not only have a certain ‘meaning’ they force, they do things (Austin, 1962 cited in Kroger and Wood, 2000).

In line with Fairclough's statement and linking it to Kroger and Wood's observation, this study examines how language is used as a means of making things happen. It looks at language use to see if it is informed by any forms of discrimination where women fall victims. The analysis explores the systems underlying the manifestations that inform the language as used by characters.

This study employs the work of Deborah Cameron in analyzing the issue of language. Cameron (1990) is primarily concerned with the way women are spoken about. It encodes the culture's values and preoccupations, and transmits these, furthermore, to each new generation. Feminists have concluded that our language is sexist. They represent or 'name' the world from a masculine viewpoint and in accordance with stereotyped beliefs about women, men and the relationship between them. Some feminists (Spender) argue that men have a monopoly of naming: and the consequences are serious, because names are not just reflections of pre-existing realities or arbitrary labels with no relation to reality, but a culture's way of fixing what will count as reality in a universe pregnant with a multitude of possible realities (Cameron, 1990). An important part of this study is the manner in which characters use language which is in line with their cultural assimilation with those utterances being made reality.

Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) hold a view that discourse as a social practice, offers a way of seeing how we experience the world, in part being through the representational capacity of language. They go on to mention that gendered representation also exist in films and most advertisements, and also in written texts. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) maintain that these representations always relate to

something already existing. This study will therefore examine the forces underlying the representation of language in *Ishashalazi*, and will check the language used by male characters and note a particular type of language used by each gender towards the opposite gender.

Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) bring to light the fact that discourse is a social practice since it is not only representational but also constitutive: not only a form of knowledge about cultural ways of thinking and doing, but also, more powerfully, a potential and arguably actual agent of social construction. Then the question remains: how far have texts of any form been instrumental in persuading the commands of the author? Mills (2004) states that textual analysis does not allow for and cannot predict 'reader response'. Reader response is however impossible to measure in this work because of its nature-close text analysis.

Millet (1970) maintains that patriarchy is all pervasive and deeply entrenched in nearly every aspect of human social life. Gender differences are according to Millet's (1970) view, ideological constructs that were fabricated so as to ensure women's subordination to men. The perpetuation of patriarchy through everyday institutions such as religious and educational institutions, family structures, the institution of marriage and heterosexual relationships are amongst the most powerful mechanisms of women's oppression that exercise power on a daily basis.

It is clear from the accounts of different authors above that culture does not allow women full control in things patterning their lives. Patriarchy is mostly pronounced by cultural manifestations and women subordination is treated as a norm. Such

perceptions promote male supremacy whilst causing much suffering to women. The manner in which women are viewed by culture should be a cause for concern to feminist writers. It is under the pretext of culture that women are oppressed and abused and as such fall victim of the prevailing powers of patriarchy. This study condemns such thinking and practice and calls upon women to question and expose such practices.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study carries out a qualitative type of research enquiry. Qualitative data is collected in the exploration of the representation of female and male characters in *Ishashalazi*. This study does not merely employ qualitative enquiry but it is influenced by the feminist principles whose deliberate focus is on gender combined with an emphasis on emancipatory goals. Qualitative researchers typically situate their work in the relevant historical and cultural context and acknowledge the complexity and diversity of human experience (Kirsch, 1999). It is through this type of research that quite a substantial amount of data about women's life is gathered. Furthermore, results based on a qualitative type of enquiry show different ways of representing women's realities that can influence societal structures and policy making (Kirsch, 1999). As a feminist researcher in this study I acknowledge that some scholars would say that this research is socially-situated and thus profoundly influenced by the cultural, ethnic, and gender biases that researchers inevitably carry. As a feminist enquiry, this study is attending to the patriarchal and hierarchical features of much traditional social science research which presumably emanates from women subordination.

According to Sarantakos (2005) reality is experienced internally (not through senses) and resides in the minds of the people who construct it; hence, each person constructs his/her own reality, which is therefore subjective. What makes this research subjective in nature is the fact that people involved in this research were unaware that their

behaviour or products would be the focus of research attention. Qualitative research basically involves data in the form of words, pictures, descriptions or narratives (Sullivan, 2001). This type of research considers reality to be subjective, constructed, multiple and diverse, as advised by Sarandakos (2005).

Harding (cited in Leavy, 2000:4) asserts that feminist researchers have an obligation to disclose a brief personal 'biography', including why they have chosen to research a given topic, and to make known the vantage point from which they will begin the enquiry. It thus remains imperative from the onset to bring to the open the fact that my own positionality impacts this study. In acknowledging my position in this study, as advised by Mackinnon (cited in Leavy, 2000) I will avoid claiming universal truths but place this study (and analysis of the two drama stories) in a specific context.

Studies that focus on the textual analysis of the representation of characters within the South African context are vast and they take different approaches. This study adopts an approach known as close text analysis, which seeks to understand and reveal hidden motivations behind the representation of characters in a chosen setting. Kirsch (1999) assert that feminist social historians have pointed out how research in social sciences, education and humanities often misrepresent, belittle, ignore, or silenced women's experiences, besides the fact that some of the history remains veiled, even today. This research, in considering Kirsch's assertion, does not promote all the elements that aim at marginalizing women but it makes it its objective to unveil some of the history that underpins women's suffering.

Silverman (2005) states that the qualitative method can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from other methods. Since this study analyses the representation of role and image of characters this method of enquiry helps to achieve the primary aim of this study as it will result in a clearer understanding of the manner characters, are represented in the plays! Cited in Silverman (2005: 8), Danzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research stresses the socially-constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. The authors' claim above is in line with the objectives of this study as it looks at the cultural principles or values to which the authors subscribe. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. The qualitative method is employed in this study because in its enquiry it puts human beings in a central position as they are the creators of the meaning systems of events and with those they construct reality. Qualitative research views human beings as the active creators of their world. Since this type of enquiry values human participation it is relevant for this study as it is exactly what it aims to interrogate: how humans construct reality in their fictive use of knowledge?

In qualitative research, social enquiry serves the purpose of helping the investigators to interpret and understand, firstly, the actors' reasons for social action, secondly, the way they construct their lives and the meanings they attach to them, and third, the social context of social action (Sarantakos, 2005). This study uses the textbook: *Ishashalazi* to analyze the two dramatised stories in the light of the feminist text analysis and theory of representation. Feminist methodology places emphases on



women and their position in society and contrasts it with the emphasis on males that prevails in other methodologies. It explains the world in a unique way (such as based on patriarchy), which guides the structure and processes of research, the choice and type of methods employed and the way the results are analyzed and interpreted (Sarantakos, 2005). Look and Fonow posit:

Feminist research is genuine in that it is marked by seeing reality through a 'female prism', that it reflects the notion of equating 'masculine' to 'universal', recognizing the central place men have held in social research and lifting the 'androcentric blinkers' to allow a better vision of reality; it also locates the researcher as a gendered being in the web of social relation (Look and Fonow, 1990 cited in Sarantakos, 2005).

Look and Fonow (1990) continue to state that feminist researchers point to areas in which ethical standards are being violated. Such violations create or perpetuate forms of oppression of and discrimination against women; for example using sexist language that perpetuates female subjugation, using unfair practices related to feminist works, intervening in 'respondents' lives and withholding information from women's subjects. Exploring language will be a requirement for this study and will necessitate its understanding and analysis thereafter. Feminist, representational and textual analysis theories will form a framework of the study.

Since this study is primarily *qualitative* and evaluative, focusing on two of the seven primary texts, it seeks to follow a text-focused method. As strongly suggested by feminist literary criticism, I will conduct a (re)reading of texts in search of the roles of women and men in *Ishashalazi*. To carry out this investigation I am mainly concerned with a close text analysis of the primary texts (*Umninimuzi* and *Kwakuhle kwethu*). This study does not use the work of one specific theorist, but will draw instead on

many of the broader themes. Guided by established scholars, it will build an argument using some of their insights as a point of departure.

The thesis offers a textual analysis which I understand as an interpretative analysis focused on reading, examining, analyzing and comparing the more implicit issues in addressing how drama stories 'represent' the role of female and male characters. Silverman (1994) a literary logic establishes underlying conditions for knowledge of a text. He infers that text is always hiding something; something which it is not within a text. Thus there is something to be revealed, stated, and brought to a certain visibility. Through the narrative that *Ishashalazi* offers this study, it looks at how it discloses the world and opens up a clearing in which sounds, ideas, rhythms, and stories are made evident (Silverman, 1994). With this information at hand this study looks at the text's hidden meaning through interpretation. Silverman (1994) states that reading only discloses the surfaces; interpretations are to reveal its meaning, rendering its character more evident. This will be covered by viewing the text as a "figure of reading" (De Man 1984: 70). This statement means that the text is not just an entity but represents the content that is read and interpreted in order to make sense.

## **Research Methods**

This study uses a book of plays *Ishashalazi*, as a source of data collection. Two plays are being investigated, namely, *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*. Two plays *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi* in the book, *Ishashalazi* are being analysed. The choice of these plays is based on their linkage to gender issues in our society. This analysis sees the data as a socially constructed set of information that has been rendered useful because of the broader social and historical context and conventions within which text has been created. Textual analysis also invokes context (Wetherell 2001), referring to social class, ethnicity, institutional context, cultural settings and the immediate setting, such as the family.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has covered theories by different authors that frame the analysis of this study. Within the umbrella feminist theory, inequality that leads to sexism and sexist oppression has been challenged. Texts as agents or messengers of such ideology are challenged and the unequal manner they represent male and female character.

This chapter acknowledges that language serves as an instrument of women oppression which is most prevalent within the family setting. It also reflects and contributes to the survival of the stereotype. As such, family is an institution of women oppression, where power transcends in a hierarchical order. At the top men occupy decision-making positions where on the pretext of culture, monopolize them. Most of these practices are perpetuated by texts we read day by day. In this regard texts are

instrumental in exercising power, as it assumes control of women by men. Emancipation of women suffering is amongst the challenges that face feminism, therefore within a feminist enquiry such women sufferings are condemned and challenged.

Within literary texts, gender is seen as the cultural property of the author. Text is viewed as expressive of a particular time and place as well as being expressed in a particular language. Activities performed by female characters are of a different quality from those performed by the male (Mills, 1995). What has been created as part of the women's role fails to move with her power to choose freely or to make her own decisions and she is represented as the passive recipient of male's actions. The male acts while the female feels.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Overview**

This chapter contains the actual gist of the overall work in this study. All data that has been collected is under scrutiny in this chapter. In conjunction with the work done by other writers on the same topics and reflecting on to the theory of text analysis and the theory of representation of characters, this chapter analyses the two short stories in *Ishashalazi*, namely, *Kwakhle Kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*. This work will be thematized into sub-sections of power, patriarchy, language and marriage.

#### **Introduction**

We all belong to societies guided by beliefs, principles and values and collectively that forms culture. Every new generation in society is guided by such beliefs, values, norms and principles as it learns to adhere and belong to a society. Eventually society takes them as rightfully theirs on the basis that they are true and normal. Our society regulates the way people function by constructing norms and roles for its members. One way in which this is done is through written texts. Texts remain a source of reference and also a guide which people in society use for their practices. Apart from being a source of reference, some texts are modeled in society as generally-accepted norms. This is a cause for concern in this study.

It is also important to mention the fact that texts are not as impartial as they ought to be. Texts have a tendency to apprehend one side of society more than the other in terms of exposure and importance. Most texts are produced by men who thus favour their view over that of women. It is also vitally important to state that men, by whom most texts are authored, have long held this privilege of authorship thus monopolizing the text industry. Since texts mirror the activities of society (Van Dijk, 2008), they should be positioned neutrally and transparently exercise even-handedness in regard to all individuals in society. They should expose and make public the contradictions within the operating systems in society which are accepted as part of people's lives. But the opposite is true with the studied Zulu texts.

According to Van Dijk (2008), texts present women as occupying an inferior position in society and for this reason women inferiority is reinforced in most interactions in society, however, not the whole truth about women in society is exposed to the public. Texts hide the fact that within their separate sphere, women create a space in which they can resist male authority in subtle and silent ways. This resistance is never articulated and remains a shared secret among women. Unfortunately when women's wisdom is exposed in texts it is either overshadowed by men's cultural principles or presented in a negative sense as we witness in *Kwakhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*.

Women receive ill-treatment in every corner on the earth and in almost all spheres, hence the subordinate place they hold in society (Belsey and Moore, 1990). Language is no exception. Women have been both undermined and sidelined in the use of language in all respects (Cameron 1985). In South African society where the Zulu language predominates, of language is often used to undermine the authority of

women. This phenomenon is also reinforced in texts that we come to contact with on daily basis. It is only recently that women have started to appear as others in isiZulu language. One could therefore imagine the structure of language writing that is subjective as it is male dominated.

Written texts of any kind have been generally accepted without question and serve the purpose of authors for which they were intended (Belsey and Moore, 1990). Unfortunately whether information from texts is correctly written or not it receives less focus and attention. Subsequently information from texts is taken as fact and acted upon as beliefs and principles of ones culture. The analysis of authors' work through scrutiny rarely occurs; only recently did writer's work come under scrutiny. This study analyses the representation of role and images of female and male characters in the plays of *Ishashalazi*, namely *Kwakuhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*.

Written texts in the past have been monopolized by the powerful domain in the public sphere-men (Cameron, 1990). Cameron's contentions that most texts are male-authored and have been in place in order to reinforce and foreground patriarchy in society are evident in both the plays examined in this project. Information from texts lasts long as it is sometimes modelled and acted upon by readers thereby forming part of their lives. In this case texts reinforce social practices that are simultaneously encoded by society as norm (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 1994). A question we need to ask ourselves as readers is: whose views and opinions are contained by texts? Men have for a very long time enjoyed benefits of authorship by virtue of being men thereby enjoying supremacy without counterparts. It is also evident in the use of

language by characters that patriarchy is prominent thereby making the reader prone to accepting it as norm.

Most countries on the African continent still have their lives rooted in their culture as a guiding device for living. Power is a noticeable phenomenon in the exercising of cultural principles within different nations. Furthermore, such exercise of power is accorded to males as opposed to females in most nations. If it happens that power is vested in the hands of a female figure it is either received with criticism or with disapproval on most communities. For example, the Zulu nation was once led by a female, King Shaka's aunt, Mkabayi. Mkabayi has received criticism from some texts as she has been represented as having had a bad influence because of the manner in which she conducted herself in the Zulu nation.

This study has noted that in most cases where power should be exercised it is mostly in the hands of a male figure. What does this mean for this study? It means that there is a probability that female representation may be influenced by who holds power. Our culture legitimizes male authority over women under its jurisdiction. Mills (1997) confirms this in his statement about the effects of male supremacy over women. He states that the rule of men over women differs from all others in not being a rule of force; it is accepted voluntarily; women lodge no complaint, and are consenting parties to it. Mills's contention affirms the fact that females are unconsciously manipulated by males. In our societies we tend not to question culture, no matter how much we disagree with aspects thereof. This is because of the fact that we have been made to venerate it.



Zulu culture accords males with the power to be in authority over both women and children and such a behavior is mostly taken as the norm and rarely questioned. It is therefore for this reason that this study takes a closer glance at power as an influential phenomenon in the representation of female and male characters in *Ishashalazi*. Most male-authored texts present female and male characters differently. Texts present male and female characters in stereotypical roles and male characters tend to dominate (Basow, 1992). Basow (1992) maintains that a wider variety of roles and behaviors is presented in texts aimed at an adult audience. Moreover earlier books written by men tended to present women as either pure or evil, Madonna-like or whore or even bitch (Snow, 1975 cited in Basow 1992). Snow's assertion holds true when she claims that female characters are presented with negativity in most male-authored texts. Such presentation is not by accident; it is done so as to reinforce the concept of male dominance - the only path to rulership in society. This study takes a closer look with a critical lens in order to reveal this to women as they act out their roles. I am concerned with the manner female characters are presented. It is so vivid that such a presentation is bias as it sets clear distinctions between the two sexes.

Characters' roles may, among other things, depict gender imbalances that are linked to certain traditional beliefs. For example, marriage as an institution is presented with characters' role as a prescription for the suggested life within marriage in real-life situations. The different roles acted by the characters are influenced by author's values and beliefs. In line with this argument and confirming male domination de Beauvoir (1990) rejects the idea that rationality and everything else our culture values are inherently masculine. She states that they were human, and universal, but dishonestly claimed by the patriarchs for themselves. Clearly from de Beauvoir's

assertion, texts written by males have a strong bent for patriarchal tradition. It requires that the reader call into question the implicit assumption that limits women and men. Lizarraga (2005) maintains that literary conventions are established by virtue of the customs, values and traditions of a society. Within such customs women are either subordinated or silenced on the pretext of observing cultural principles.

This study raises awareness of society's beliefs texts referring to women. It challenges the representation of characters on issues relating to gender roles, power relations and roles attached to such representation. Gender is used to show the socially-constructed differences between women and men in society. Most texts reinforce gender roles thus attaching imbalances between women and men. Lynn, Chancer and Watkins (2006) define gender as social and cultural interpretations that turn sexual difference into more than a mere biological distinction. According to them, defining gender also means noting that the two-sided bifurcations that have differentiated the worlds of "masculinity" and "femininity" have also, throughout history, accorded superiority to men and inferiority to women. Out of the many definitions of gender this study will use gender as closely defined by Lynns, et al. Certain factors such as culture play a role in preventing women from breaking away from gender roles in turn explain the value placed on women by society.

Gender roles are more prevalent within family settings. Chancer et al observe:

According to de Beauvoir within a traditional nuclear family in which a mother disappropriately parents and a father is deemed a breadwinner, little girls may initially seem to be the privileged ones because they are allowed to stay close to their mothers' skirts; they can continue to be clingy and emotional, and to express feelings of dependency if they wish to. On the other hand, while the little girl is allowed this

leeway, little boys soon learn that “to be a man” is to exude independence; as clearly drawing on a conventional model of familial expectations little boys soon realize that their crying may be frowned upon (Chancer, *et al*, 2006, 274)

Even if boys were initially disadvantaged, de Beauvoir contends that they quickly begin to perceive that their sacrifice will soon be compensated. Their long suffering will soon be replaced by patriarchy based on power and privilege. Thus patriarchy coupled with power domination is not just a trend that one engages in but it manifests itself from the very early stages of childhood, when children are vulnerable to any manipulation by parents and the analysis of the two stories is to prove this. This is the time when children’s minds are so porous that they absorb whatever they are fed and to save it in the reservoir of their knowledge for future use. If children come across the misrepresentation of characters in any way that misrepresentation will remain truth in the children’s and readers’ minds.

Texts are therefore instrumental in informing certain beliefs; for example, patriarchal manifestations absorbed by their readers. I therefore argue that in analyzing texts we do not merely look at the writing per se but we look at the very deep rooted ideological issues of patriarchy that are continuously reinforced through written texts. Thus this study looks at the already-existing forms of patriarchy as represented by characters in texts. It challenges forms of discrimination that result in women suffering under the pretexts of culture. What follows next is the analysis of both the stories as premised by the objectives of the study.

The analysis of each of the stories will have quotes from the stories which will then be accompanied by the direct translation. Furthermore, some Zulu words that have no synonymous English words will be used as they are in the analysis. In *Kwakhule*

*kwethu* I will be using the words mother-in-law and daughter-in-law for convenience but in actual fact they are characters who are prospective mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

## KWAKUHLE KWETHU (Ntuli)

*Kwakhle kwethu* links two opposing lifestyles: the rural and urban. In a traditional lifestyle living in an urban area means that one gets most of what is scarce but sometimes never in rural areas. For example, factors like access to higher education, good health facilities, a good standard of living, and employment opportunities. These are amongst the most common reasons why people move from rural to urban areas. About fifty years ago there was also no demand for people to move to urban areas other than what I have mentioned. People could live in rural areas and had their needs met. They lived on farming (stock and crop farming) and managed to meet the needs of their families. According to Ntuli's presentation of characters he designated them firstly into those living in rural area and those in urban area. Secondly, characters are presented according to their roles and gender within a marriage.

For rural people, living in an urban area was purely for enrichment purposes because opportunities were mostly in urban areas then. Nevertheless, the manner in which Ntuli (1988) represents an urban area in *Kwakhle kwethu* is very different from what is actually the case nowadays and even in the traditional lifestyle. According to the representation of an urban area in *Kwakhle kwethu*, Ntuli has presented it in such a way that to people who still hold their traditional values would not want to be there. How does Ntuli present an urban area? He uses a woman in communicating his belief and views of this are.

Lizzy : Sanibonani. Ngaze ngajabula ukunibona. Mina ngiwumakoti kaDabula... Ngaze ngajabula ukuzobona ekhaya mummy. Uyangibona ukuthi ngiwumakoti omuhle kanjani? UDabula uyakwazi ukuzikhethela.  
*Greetings to you all.. I am very pleased to see you. I am Dabula's fiancé'... I am very please to see home mummy. Can you see how beautiful a makoti I am? Dabula has a good choice.*

Lizzy comes to her boyfriend's house (Dabula) for the first time and introduces herself to both Masibiya (future mother in-law) and Thembi (future sister in-law) who are in the kitchen. The kitchen is traditionally known to be the place where women belong. The author has staged women in a place that has stereotypically been the sphere of women. Lizzy informs them that she is Dabula's bride (*makoti*). She also assures Masibiya that she is beautiful and the fact that Dabula has made the right choice by choosing her. It is apparent from Lizzy's statement that Dabula, a rural male, has chosen her because of her beauty but we are not told of any other valid characteristic about Lizzy other than that. In fact she is much older than Dabula. This representation presents the choice of a woman as based on less-important reasons; it is presumed that women should be concerned with their beauty so that they are acceptable to their male counterparts. Lizzy acts the role of an urban woman who does not value traditional beliefs and customs. Ntuli has exaggerated the role played by Lizzy and this representation gives a false impression to readers that all women from urban areas do not value their traditional beliefs or any beliefs for that matter. This way of representing female character affirms concerns by some feminists like Kate Millet that women are negatively portrayed by texts. Even with the changing lifestyle in the Zulu culture, a woman who becomes a bride does not behave in the manner Lizzy's role is represented on first meeting the in-laws. This representation of urban women does not reflect a true image of urban women. Even with the transformation South Africa faces, different communities (including urban

communities) still regard *inhlonipho* (respect) as highly important in upholding different societal values and beliefs. This applies to all people across genders. Meeting people for the first time can be intimidating as one does not know whether one will be accepted or rejected and this applies across genders. Here the author presents urban women as people who have no values and lack *inhlonipho* (respect); another negative representation of female characters.

Lizzy's urban confidence is represented by her grand entrance in the kitchen where she introduces herself to Masibiya and Thembi. She does not take a seat instead kisses her mother-in-law on the cheek. This behaviour does not happen within the Zulu culture and if it does happen it is met with great suspicion. Neither does her attitude represent any culture since most cultures have high regards for good and moral behaviour. Again, the author's presentation of Lizzy as acting the role of an urban woman has demeaning connotations to women. The author's intention for this kind of representation may be that the author is trying to portray Lizzy in a bad light in order to put the readers against her. Representation is linked to power, the practices of ideological domination and selective marginalization (Nayer, 2006). Normally a person who introduces another enters the house first or else they come together to take a seat. In this case Lizzy enters the house first and leaves Dabula outside. This behavior somehow represents urban women as people who lead, even in instances where men are supposed to lead and most of the time do not succeed. In Lizzy's case she proves to be unfit for such a position; this presentation presents Lizzy in power and changing the norms. While this representation of urban women as people who can lead, it portrays them badly in that readers are left with a picture of women from urban areas who are good for nothing as they prove to be inadequate when awarded

opportunities. Such a representation is an insult to women as a collective and proves that men will ensure that they exercise their authority and supremacy in ways that marginalize women. This situation affirms what Nayer (2006) infers about representation. She states that representations derive their common base of understanding from larger cultural ideas regarding women and men. Lizzy's behaviour is viewed at, at what culture regard women in society, then the representation of women should equal cultural beliefs and values about women.

Moi and Lehtonen (2000) warn that since literary studies are concerned with nurturing personal growth and raising the individual consciousness by linking literature to life, particularly to the lived experiences of the reader, there might be a danger of assimilating beliefs and ideas of authors. Ntuli's use of an urban area is in line with what he believes to be an ideal urban woman thus imposing his beliefs and ideas to readers. His construction of Lizzy in a text shows an urban woman who displays wayward behavior. Furthermore it holds the assumption that rural people do not want to accept transformation which is being initiated by people from urban areas.

Urban women are also represented as people who are "clever" and can, consequently, get preferential treatment and can be in power over rural women. We get this representation as apparent in the manner Lizzy interacts with her prospective sister-in-law, Thembi.

Lizzy : *Skwiza*, angithi igama lakho uThembi? UDabu ungixoxele konke ngawe. Uthi kuhlupha ngoba uhlala emaphandleni. Idolobha ngabe selakugeza, wahlakanipha, waqhakaza. Ngisize *Skwiza* ungilandele impahla yami kuDabu. Uthe usayobingelela daddy.



*Skwiza, I suppose your name is Thembi? Dabu has told me a lot about you. He is concerned that you live in a rural area. The city would have washed you, making you clever and bright. Help me and bring my luggage from Dabu. He went to greet daddy.*

In the lines above Lizzy is telling Thembi that Dabula has told her a lot about Thembi. Dabula wishes Thembi lived in an urban area so that she can be clean, bright and clever. She furthermore asks Thembi to collect her luggage from Dabu outside. The author is exaggerating when he represents women from rural areas in particular. Ntuli (1988) is showing the two lifestyles in the anticipation of power and shows his preference of women by representing rural women at a disadvantage. This representation concurs with Millet's (2003) assertion that the essence of politics is power and this power is exercised by male over women. The role played by a man may not have been obvious to readers but when delving into the meaning of texts it is essential that we investigate the positionality of the author as advised by Scholes. He observes that:

Texts are places where power and weakness become visible and discussable, where learning and ignorance manifest themselves, where the structures that enable and constrain our thoughts and actions become palpable, (Scholes, 1985. xi).

Clearly, male-authored texts have the monopoly; the minds of readers can be made to believe that women are failures. The author subscribes to the stereotypic behaviour held by society.

Thembi is Dabula's younger sister who resides with her parents in the rural areas. She knows nothing about urban life until Lizzy appears on the scene. She is a typical rural girl, obedient, submissive and modest, and the opposite of Lizzy. Ntuli exaggerates his representation. This representation is stereotypical as it presents women from rural and urban areas as totally different in their behaviour. Even if people behave

differently, Lizzy's behaviour is questionable and does not reflect that of most urban girls. Thembi's rural attitude does not last long. With the arrival of Lizzy everything changes. Thembi is naïve and is easily swayed by Lizzy to whom she looks up as a role model. She desperately tries to emulate her. She sees the kind of lifestyle she had before as being inferior and primitive. She admires Lizzy. This change is visible as she no longer adheres to her chores as diligently as she used to and she now gets into trouble with her mother. Lizzy has corrupted her. Scholes (1985) states that all texts have secret, hidden deeper meanings; this statement confirms what lies behind the representation of the characters of Lizzy and Thembi by the author. This is not just a story written for commercial purposes; there lies with it knowledge, ideas and beliefs of a specific affiliation.

- Thembi : Yaze yaba yinhle impahla yakho Sis'umakoti.  
*Your thing is so beautiful, sis' umakoti.*
- Lizzy : Uyayithanda Skwiza? Yisikhafu leso, kuthiwa yi-mufferr. Sigqokwa kanje.  
*Do you like it Skwiza? That is a scarf, it is called a mufferr. It is worn like this.*
- Lizzy : Ake uzibuke Skwiza ukuthi umuhle kanjani. Sekusele ukuthi ngikuthinte nge-make-up ukuze uqhakaze ngempela.  
*Look at how beautiful you look. I only need to touch you up with make-up to make you very bright.*

According to the author's presentation of rural women they are ugly, not too clever and passive when it comes to decision-making. Thembi obviously wants to distance herself from her cultural principles as she is so taken by Lizzy's style. Rural girls, as represented by Thembi, cannot be independent by virtue of being from rural areas; they are only good enough to serve under clever, sophisticated and beautiful urban

women. This presentation is not a true reflection of reality, especially today. Nowadays it is hard to tell whether a woman is from a rural or urban area as the appearance, looks and even intelligence cannot be used as an indication of place of origin. Such a representation is a clear distortion of the truth and can be regarded as an insult to women by the author. It gives the impression to readers that the ideal woman is the one from the urban areas and it further creates implications for rural women who may now feel that they need to belong to the city in order to be acceptable in society. This representation sends a signal that it is not desirable to live in a rural area as one might carry the same characteristics as those presented by the author when he portrays the behavior of rural women. As Lehtonen (2000) state, the author is a party to the formation of meaning since the context of the text is mostly about what the author thinks. As the author of *Kwakhle kwethu*, Ntuli reinforces the idea that in order for a woman to be beautiful, clever and glamorous, she has to live in an urban area.

On the contrary, currently the environment where one lives does not matter much whether you are from a rural or urban area. People from all walks of life from different backgrounds are living their dreams. As proof of that there are very successful women who originate from both rural and urban areas. With the growing support from different organizations offered in rural areas and educational facilities offered, rural areas are slowly but surely catching up with the urban standards of living. I argue that Ntuli, as the author, used Thembi's role incorrectly, but it cannot be argued that rural areas do not have people who behave in the manner that Thembi does in *Kwakhle kwethu*.

Mills (1995) asserts that a great many representational practices are not in the interest of women. Thus the representation of female characters according to the text of *Kwakuhle Kwethu* is as such neither benefits nor improves women's status as the portrayal of Thembi ridicules rural women and also shows that urban women are only good for unimportant aspects of life. Currently, and even traditionally, women engage in very important roles, and even constructive ones where they assume roles of leadership and mentorship but this is not acknowledged by many texts; instead women are given roles that are not important and do not pose challenges to them. This representation shows patriarchy is in full control and leaves no chance of women being perceived in reality. I as a rural woman see it as my and many other rural women's responsibility to question the manner in which we are represented by literature and to also put an end to so much incorrect information published about rural women. I further argue that the author's representation of rural women through Thembi's role puts a low value on them in the eyes of readers who may not be from rural areas. In this instance the author uses two women, Lizzy and Thembi, to uncover inequality that may exist even within the same gender in exercising power and dominance.

An almost similar representation of women is also represented by MaSibiya and Lizzy's characters. A relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law is shown by these two female characters. In most cultures the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is expected to be filled with thorny tensions. Folk sayings and jokes reflect the anticipated hostility between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law. For example, a saying from Tunisia, North African states, "I wish my daughter: the sun of winter and I wish my daughter-in-law: the sun of summer." (The winter sun

warms the body, and in contrast, the summer's sun is uncomfortably hot). In striking contrast is the mother/daughter in-law relationship described in the Bible's Book of Ruth, in which a caring, supportive in-law relationship between Naomi and Ruth, who lived in the ancient lands of Israel and Moab, existed. Theirs remains a model of an ideal in-law relationship. (Averick, Lcsw, 2000). Many of us are familiar with both extremes of in-law relationships: caring and amiable ones and uncaring and hostile ones. In between are degrees and variations of both types. The representation of the relationship between Lizzy and MaSibiya is premised on the assumption that women are capable of oppressing other women on the basis of culture, inequalities within the family and patriarchy.

Mills (1995) states that language is often viewed simply as a tool or a vehicle for ideas, rather than as a material entity which may in fact shape those ideas. MaSibiya has a role of a mother-in-law who does not get along with her daughter-in-law, Lizzy. She (MaSibiya) protects her family and always wants to ensure that she is instrumental in bringing about that. In doing that she is engaged in meetings where she communicates her concerns. All her efforts are met with no success and such representation can impact negatively on the readers. Lizarranga (2005) maintains that literary conventions are established by virtue of the customs, values and traditions of a society. Traditionally, our society holds the view that men are heads of families and responsible for making and passing laws that govern families. It is therefore obvious that women always fight a losing battle within the traditional family and this is evident in *Kwakhle kwethu* as reflected in the manner married life is represented. In this way this text has confirmed Lehtonen's (2000) claim that texts reinstate certain behaviour.

Based on the cultural beliefs about women's possessive positions in the Zulu culture women do not have a say in the decisions that affect their families. More than often, language is used to signal this distinction. Criswold (1994) dismisses the existence of culture. He infers that there are only people who behave in a wide variety of way; our culture is man-made and thus ensures that it allows power to generate within the parameters of family where men are powered. Criswold's inferences ring true after what transpires in *Kwakhle kwethu* about the position of women. Noticeably in *Kwakhle kwethu* is the role language plays in the marriage institution in shaping ideas about characters, as stated by Mills (1995). The only married characters in this play are Makhoba and MaSibiya. Marriage occupies a position of fundamental importance in society (Ferrante, 1996). It is the institution which ensures the legitimate transformation of possessions, and thus power, from one generation of males to the next (Ferrante, 1996). Ferrante's statement concurs with the situation in *Kwakhle kwethu* and is congruent to the Zulu culture. Both MaSibiya and Ntuli are from a rural and a cultural background. Language has been used as a tool with which one group dominates over the other. More often language represents women's words that have negative meanings or connotations, while in turn consistently implies authority (Besley and Moore, 1990). By and large cultural values are believed to be rigid. It is only MaSibiya who is portrayed as showing these unchanging cultural values. Makhoba is portrayed as understanding, tolerant and flexible especially in relation to her son Dabula who has gone to work in the city (Johannesburg). In the city he falls in love with a township girl. Lizzy is modern, sophisticated and a rural misfit. In the rural areas this is not considered an ideal daughter-in-law. Her character and behavior are normally unacceptable in rural areas.

- MaSibiya : Joko ake sibonane ngalensambatheka esiyilethelwe uDabula.  
*Joko can we have some conversation about this funny woman dabula has brought home.*
- Thembi : Usho uskwiza mama?  
*Do you mean skwiza, mother?*
- MaSibiya : Lomlonyana wakho ngizowuvala ngempama. USkwiza!  
USkwiza wani! Susa lezitsha ezishiywe yizicwicwicwi  
ngizolungisela uyihlo. Nx.  
*I will shut your mouth by slapping you in the face. Skwiza!*  
*Skwiza for what! Move these dishes that were left by this sophisticated woman, I want to prepare for your father. Nx.*
- Makhoba : Mh lugwele uThukela namhlanje. Lwehla nezigodo.  
*Mh the Tugela River is full today. It flows with tree trunks..*
- MaSibiya : Kufanele! Ngenziwa ukuhlupheka nokudinwa.  
*This should be expected. I caused by suffering and anger*
- Makhoba : Uyanxapha, uyahlupheka, udiniwe! Kwenzenjani?  
Okungcono angiphume lapha ngiziyele esibayeni sami...  
*You are suffering, you are angry! What wrong? It is better that I get out and go to my kraal...*
- Makhoba : Ak'ungitshale kuyicala yini uma umfana esezithathele ubambo lwakhe?  
*Tell me is it wrong if my boy has chosen his life partner?*
- MaSibiya : Yehheni yise kaDabula, usho kugcwala umlomo, uthi untangayethu lo uwubambo lukaDabula? Ngoba sekuphele izimbambo yini?  
*Oh Dabula's father, you say with confidence that the woman of my age is the life partner for Dabula.*  
*Is it because life partners are nomore?*
- Makhoba : ULizzy yintokazi engabuzwa.  
*Lizzy is a perfect girl.*
- MaSibiya : Nami kungashiwo kuthiwe ngiyintokazi...  
*I can as well be called a girl*
- MaSibiya : Baba, angiyifuni kulomuzi lento yasedolobheni efike noDabula.  
*Baba, I do not want in this house this thing that is brought by Dabula from the city.*
- Makhoba : Uyisoka umfana wami.  
*You are a charmer, my son*
- MaSibiya : Naso-ke isikhalo sami. Kwenziwa yini umfana emncane kangaka, angaqonywa ntombi kodwa abuthe isalukazi.

*That is my concern. What makes the boy as young as this one not fall for girls of his age but picks an old lady?*

In the lines above MaSibiya is having a conversation with her husband, Makhoba. She is voicing her concerns about Lizzy whom Dabula intends to marry. Makhoba notices that his wife is furious about this matter as that is expressed in the conversation they are having. Makhoba does not seem to have a problem with Lizzy and sees her as a good girl that could be his daughter-in-law. Choosing a wife for a son is a crucial moment for the entire family; the final word, however, should be from the son who will have to spend the rest of his life with his wife. Noticeable in this conversation is the dominance and influence Makhoba holds in getting his way on matters which fall under the pretext of culture. Uma (1989) is right when she maintains that not only people around us but literature also tends to reinforce the images of women as loyally-devoted to their husbands. *Kwakhle kwethu* shows this behaviour in both its representation of MaSibiya's succumbing character and also to readers. Most readers may not be in a position to realize that most books written by men aim to influence them so they tend to take texts as representing reality.

Writing has for a long time been the monopoly of men, men who dictate social norms, who want to see only that aspect of the women which fits into their personal perspective and men who are incapable of empathizing with a woman's internal self (Uma, 1989). I am not trying to be prescribing to the author how he should have written this story but I am dismissing the manner in which the role of MaSibiya is represented as both a woman and a wife. Her role is oversimplified by trying to fit her into a situation where her opinion is viewed against a man's perspective. No matter how much she states her case it is overshadowed by men's perspective. This



representation promotes inequality between male and female characters as one character's opinion takes precedent over the other, and in this instance, it is the male that dominates.

Elliot's (1978) assertion that in Zulu culture women hold a subordinate position is evident in the role of MaSibiya. MaSibiya persistently disapproves of the relationship her son is having with Lizzy but all in vain. Her role is represented as a person whose efforts interfere with other people's lives when her intention is in fact to help. Considering the fact that as a woman, MaSibiya, has been given demarcation lines for her actions it is not surprising that culture is placed first. As a mirror of society culture reflects the fact that women should not get involved in decision making in matters affecting their lives, and MaSibiya is not listened to about her concerns and fears because she does not belong to the public sphere.

Belsey and Moore (1990) state that cultural history of feminism emphasizes the ways in which social convention has tended to operate on behalf of the dominant group, and norms of femininity have worked in the interests of men. MaSibiya has to be limited in acting her role as both a wife and a mother because according to culture she is not allowed to enter into the sphere of men in making decisions for the family. She then remains subservient to the will and commands of Makhoba, her husband. For example, arguing with a husband in the traditional Zulu culture is disrespectful of a wife. Again no matter how valid and evident her case is, as a woman she has to succumb to what her husband wants and all this is represented by the use of language in promoting stereotypical beliefs. Language has been used as a tool with which men dominate over women. More often language represents women's words that have

negative meanings or connotations, while term consistently implies authority (Besley and Moore, 1990)

Patricia (1990) contends that traditional accounts assume that power as domination operates from top down by forcing and controlling victims to bend to the will of more powerful superiors. It therefore is no accident that MaSibiya finds herself caught up in a similar situation to that stated by Patricia. By virtue of their gender, women hold secondary positions in society and are thus accessible to male domination. In explaining why women stay in oppressive relations with abusive men, even with ample opportunity to leave, one has to closely look at patriarchy. Patriarchy is one of the agents of women oppression camouflaged within culture. It is solely responsible for the loss of the willingness of the victim to collude in her own victimization (Patricia, 1990). Culture serves as the backbone of every society within a specific racial group. Culture is our heritage, it acknowledges our identity and serves as our pride with which we compare ourselves to other racial groups. Culture, however, forces us to live in certain ways that are sometimes against our will. Most women's actions are monitored by cultural norms and values. In order to be an acceptable member of society as a woman you need to be respectful of what is possession. Good wives listen to their husbands and respect their mothers-in-law. Questioning their decisions will mean being disrespectful. Coupled with this is the sense of loyalty towards the husbands who are engineers of cultural laws and regulations. The Zulu culture allows mothers- in-law to be in authority over daughters-in-law. They are supposed to teach daughters-in-law habits within the culture specific to their families, therefore a mother/daughter-n-law relationship should be a happy one. Surprisingly, such a relationship turns out to be a thorny one leaving one party disadvantaged and

of silenced and never questioning authority. This is in itself an indication of forms of patriarchy.

Patriarchy is an institution perpetuated by political techniques of control (de Beaugrade, 1988). Cited in de Beaugrade (1988) Goode observes:

Patriarchy is the major institution perpetuated by political techniques of control. To recognize its basis in patriarch, wherein the relationship between sexes is essentially political, is the most pertinent and fundamental consideration one can bestow upon our culture; no other system has ever exercised such complete control over its subjects. Its chief institution is the family, which mediates, between the individual and the social structure and effect

According to de Beaugrade, patriarchal families give total ownership over wife and children to a man. It is by no surprise then to learn that Makhoba treats his wife in the same way as he treats Thembi and this behaviour is acceptable and normal as it is internalized when young so nothing is challenged later on when it should be necessary to question the status quo. de Beaugrade (1988) states that it is within a patriarchal family that the young are socialised into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes. It is supposed to make sense that Dabula is in disagreement with his mother but supported by his father. He is fully aware of the position his mother holds.

MaSibiya's efforts to make her voice heard in the family are met with dismay as their environment is a stronghold of patriarchy that tries hard to exercise its supremacy and control of social practices such as culture. de Beauvoir (cited in Cameron, 1990) rejects the idea that rationality and everything else our culture values are inherently masculine. She states they are human, universal, but dishonestly claimed by the patriarchs for themselves. Thus for any individual in order to have one's ideas heard and to gain recognition, one has to belong to patriarchs. Unfortunately only men qualify for this position and women serve submissively under their authority.

*Kwakhle kwethu* has thus presented women who respond to the tradition that is overshadowed by the traditional suffering ideal of womanhood.

It is, however, very strange that Makhoba, a rural man, seems approving of his son bringing home this type of a daughter-in-law. In patriarchy, the function of norm is delegated to the male, such that the female is other or alien and inspires fear (de Beaugrade, 1988). Makhoba is understanding and tolerant of his son's relationship. He even offers to assist him with *lobola*. It is also worth mentioning that Makhoba is initially sceptical about this relationship but if he acknowledges that it would mean he agrees with his wife that would not be what patriarchy intends. He secretly warns his son to take some more time before marrying Lizzy as a proof of his uncertainties about his son's choice of wife but does not admit it openly. This clearly shows that he too can see these shortfalls his daughter-in-law holds, but it would be a blow to his ego for him to agree with his wife as women cannot be engaged in such important matters; their place is mainly domestic and should always remain like that. Makhoba tries very hard to be diplomatic in stating that, that Dabula does not see he also agrees with his mother. He maintains that Dabula should take time before he goes on with his decision. This is the same advice MaSibiya gives Dabula but again the author does not emphasize this agreement in the play. As soon as his son reassures him that he has made the right choice, Makhoba agrees. This kind of behavior by Makhoba is not typical of a rural man; a rural man is expected to be rigid but it is quite surprising that Makhoba seems to be flexible. It should also be noted that Makhoba does not show this attitude to his wife. The representation of family life in disagreements that are premised by male domination promotes patriarchy as a possible behaviour by males in ensuring that they rule their women.

Ironically Makhoba changes his attitude when he relates to his wife, MaSibiya. Taylor (1994) states that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence. "People can suffer real damage and real distortion if society around them mirrors back to them a confining or demeaning or a contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor, 1994). It is clear from Taylor's assertion that women do not only suffer male domination in society, but through this domination women also carry with them emotional scars of misrecognition by their society. Misrecognition can inflict harm and can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being (Taylor, 1990). The position represented by MaSibiya is similar to Taylor's claim and means it is the treatment that women have to receive from their male counterparts. Some feminists have argued that women in patriarchal societies have been induced to adopt a depreciatory image of themselves. No matter how bold MaSibiya and other women in society may be they still have internalized a picture of their own inferiority, so that when some of the obstacles to their advancement fall away, they may be incapable of taking advantage of the new opportunities, and beyond this they be condemned to suffer the pain of low self-esteem (Taylor, 1990). Whether men do this consciously or unconsciously the point is that their domination can never allow a situation where their subordinates gain power and access to all the doors that lead to men's territory. Such men do not believe in listening to a women's point of view and do not recognize women's efforts to enhance their social conditions such as the one represented by MaSibiya.

The roles of mothers within society are generally understood to be those of caring, loving, nurturing, raising children and most obviously domestic responsibility.

Equally important are duties towards the daughters-in-law, but the reality is very different. It is normal for the mother/daughter-in-law relationship to be an unhealthy one. MaSibiya openly hates and disapproves of Lizzy's and Dabula's relationship. She even states that Lizzy must leave because she is much older than Dabula and she is just good for nothing. Elliot (1978) states that within the Zulu tradition people are guided by strict codes of honour and rules of etiquette that are patriarchal in nature. This kind of behaviour is pertinent in *Kwakhle kwethu* as it is acted out by Makhoba. Makhoba is holding his position of being the head of the family and thus remains the only person who possesses the authority when making rules. This kind of behaviour clearly undermines women and excludes them from making decisions that affect their lives.

Lehtonen (2000) maintains that the meaning of the text should concur with the author's context. Coinciding with Lehtonen's statement is the manner in which the author attempts to raise male gender over female gender. Makhoba is firm and does not want this kind of attitude from his wife. He demands that MaSibiya should refrain from making comments about Dabula's wife-to-be. Here with his wife, Makhoba seems more typical of a rural man under the influence of patriarchy. He must have the final say. Whether MaSibiya is against this relationship or not is of no significance. This kind of attitude on the part of Makhoba is a huge contradiction. He relates on different levels with his wife and with his son. With Dabula, Makhoba is understanding whilst he is seen to be authoritarian with his wife. In this manner the author has successfully made an act of male supremacy over female a norm.

MaSibiya's role is represented as a difficult rural woman who does not want to change in terms of adopting new styles as for example in wearing make-up. Instead Makhoba, a man, seems to be for the idea of change and has no problem with seeing his daughter wearing make-up.

Dabula : Sawubona mama. Usaphila.  
*Hellow mother. Are you fine?*

MaSibiya : Ngaphandle kwalemhlole engehlelayo.  
*Except for these the strange happenings.*

Makhoba : Hawu uyisolani ingane ngoba izihlolele?  
*Oh what is wrong when the child accessorizes?*

MaSibiya : Akuvumi nokuba ngikhulume. Ukudla sekuzolunga. Ngicela ningene ngaphakathi.  
*I cannot even talk. Food is almost ready. Please come in.*

Ntuli may have deliberately presented MaSibiya in such a role so as to send a particular message to readers about what he perceives as typical of rural women. At the same time the message contradicts the behavior of men in similar situations.

MaSibiya is a powerful woman who is constantly losing the battle in most of the decisions about issues that need to be taken concerning her family. Her strength and power is occasionally weakened by circumstantial cultural norms that most of the time favours a man's point of view. MaSibiya is traditional and from a rural background. Anything modern is foreign to her. She seems not to be impressed by a modern lifestyle. Her role, however, is presented negatively as a person who interferes with other people's lives with the aim of destroying them. Dabula is her only son. MaSibiya and Lizzy are complete opposites. Lizzy's attitude is unacceptable by MaSibiya's standards. A traditional Zulu woman is responsible for all the domestic chores including cleaning the house, washing dishes, doing laundry, cooking,

collecting firewood; the list is endless (Elliot, 1978). This is what makes a woman a true woman and worth marrying in rural areas within the Zulu tradition. Lizzy does none of these. She does not possess the qualities MaSibiya is looking for in a daughter-in-law. In this instance the representation of characters portray stereotypes in traditionally-held beliefs about a daughter in-law and has the implications that daughter-in-laws should live to please their mothers-in-law in order for them to be acceptable in those specific families and it also falsely represents the life of married couples, implying that it is largely clouded by disagreements, and most of the time the man wins and the woman is loser. MaSibiya dislikes Lizzy even more because she is older than Dabula. She tells Dabula to look for other rural girls instead of this no-good Lizzy. MaSibiya believes that Lizzy is here to corrupt her family, Thembi her daughter, Dabula her son and even Makhoba her husband. None of them see Lizzy for who she really is. Only MaSibiya sees Lizzy's shortfalls and MaSibiya is not submissive; she speaks her mind. She does not keep all of this hatred for Lizzy to herself. She is articulate and vocal. This is highly unlikely of a rural woman. She even argues with her husband which is not normal in Zulu culture. Bold as she may be, MaSibiya's character and representation is not triumphant in the story since all her attempts are disregarded and she is not given an opportunity for her point of view to be heard. Instead male dominance is promoted as it is the male's opinions that get precedent over her concerns.

The author's use of language in enforcing the cultural principles with regard to how women and men should enact their role is prevalent in this story. No matter how hard MaSibiya tries to make her case heard even if her argument is a valid one, her attempts are brushed aside by what is considered as cultural principles that guide the



Zulu tradition. Ntuli has made use of language in passing the message across. Furthermore, it is made clear that within the traditional Zulu setting a woman's word or opinion carries no weight. Weatherall (2002) holds the view that language is a powerful means of suppressing women thereby confining them to the home, the private sector. In support of Weatherall, Spender (1980) states that women are historically known as not having been influential thinkers. Even when they gain access, as MaSibiyi has, the domain is controlled by men. Thus men still hold the dominant position in society and agents such as literature reinforce this practice.

Power is the key to understanding patterns of language. Van Dijk (2008) defines social power in terms of control; that is, of one group over another group and its members. Traditionally, control is a man's sphere of influence. This power and control is most evident in the texts we read. In our society people who are in power are usually male and as a result texts reflect men's power and social advantage and it also reflects women's relative lack of power and their social disadvantage. Furthermore, power has been sited in the use of language hence gender inequality. Language is used and linked to patriarchal social orders where sexism takes prevalence. Nowadays social settings reflect a very sexist language and such is reinforced in many forms such as in written texts. It is further rooted in the deeper parts of our social structures at homes, churches, schools and social gatherings.

The story presents a clash of two worlds, namely, the rural world and the urban world. Dabula grew up in a rural area but is working in the city and seems to be completely transformed. He no longer thinks or behaves like a typical rural boy. He is living with Lizzy even though they are not yet married. He wants to marry Lizzy knowing very

well she is much older than he is. These are all the signs which illustrate how much Dabula has changed. He is now become absorbed into city life. Dabula is represented as a person who has taken to city but has not forgotten his origins. He represents a person who is focused and vigilant as opposed to that of Lizzy who displays strange behaviour in situations in which she is not familiar.

Lizzy is modern, sophisticated and urbanized. She represents city life. She interacts freely with her in-law, in fact she overdoes her efforts to be accepted but at the same time seems ignorant of rural life. She is a complete misfit in Dabula's rural home and she does not seem to care about that. Do all urban/city girls behave like Lizzy? This is a misrepresentation of urban women. Urban women do not behave in this manner.

Makhoba is a rural chauvinistic authoritarian man. His word is law. It is not that Makhoba is blind to Lizzy's shortcomings but simply consciously decides to ignore them. Hanretta (1998) states that a woman's power as advocate for her son can, and does, threaten a husband's control over the reproduction of the homestead. It is therefore not surprising to find that Makhoba adopts patterns of silencing MaSibiya in trying to undermine her power over her son. Makhoba's role as a man is in contrast to the norm. How he relates to Dabula as compared to his wife, MaSibiya is completely different. In that way this play has not represented characters in the usual way. When looking at how MaSibiya gets to know Lizzy it is totally different from how Makhoba gets to know the same person.

Dabula : Baba, wuye-ke uLizzy Khambule ebengixoxa ngaye, Lizzy, ubaba ongizalayo lona

*Father, this is Lizzy Khambule I was talking about Lizzy this is my father.*

Lizzy : Ngiyajabula ukukubona baba.  
*I am pleased to meet you, father.*

Dabula introduces Lizzy to his father. Surprisingly, Lizzy politely acknowledges Makhoba in an acceptable manner. On the other hand, MaSibiya does not receive the same treatment from Lizzy. She introduces herself in a very unacceptable manner. This may have been done in order to highlight gender supremacy where preferential treatment is given to male characters over female characters. He may also have wanted to show the relationship between women (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship) and the resultant divisions it carries within the family. Since the relationship between Makhoba and Dabula is good and the relationships they have with Lizzy shows no sign of hatred, the relationship that is problematic is that between the women. This presentation encodes gender inequality where one gender gains more respect. Hanretta observes:

Looking at the status of women in the twentieth century, Harriet Ngubane has argued that women's 'outside' origins, together with their association with the birth and deaths processes - encoded in Zulu thought as transitional or liminal experiences between the material and spiritual worlds - served to construct women as the transcendental 'other' in Zulu society. This 'otherness' was not restricted to wives, but was transferred by association to all women (Hanretta, 1998).

According to Hanretta, the position of MaSibiya is not only because she is a married woman but it is the accepted way that women within Zulu society are received. Ntuli, as the author of *Kwakhle kwethu*, has thus acted in favour of this belief by reinforcing the behaviour that demeans women's status in society as observed by other authors. He has also represented women in the role of Lizzy as people who destroy culture. When considering the fact that all societies are ruled by good behaviour that reflects the morals of their affiliation, Lizzy's behaviour reflects a

society that lacks morals and acceptable behaviour. Women have thus been represented in very demeaning ways and this representation is absorbed as being typical of women's behaviour to readers. Lizzy does not like the kind of food that is eaten at Dabula's home, she checks dust before she sits on the chair and she sits between Makhoba and Dabula, a behaviour which shows disrespect in the Zulu culture, in particular. In Zulu culture a *makoti* (bride to be) adopts the concepts of *ukuzila* (For example avoiding to be in the same house with them, show respect by avoiding eating in front of laws, not calling their names, not talking to them) which goes hand in glove with *ukuhlonipha* (respect). All these acts surprise both Makhoba and Dabula but they still do not agree with MaSibiya's concerns. What could possibly cause people to behave in such a manner? Power fits the bill. While Masibiya's hatred is clearly revealed in the story, the author has however turned a blind eye to Dabula's role as that of a weak man who is overpowered by Lizzy.

- Lizzy : Oh ngafa ukukhathala. Ek is moeg.  
*Oh my feet. Oh I am very tired. Ek is moeg. Oh my feet.*
- Dabula : Bengithi usuzoyosiza umama ekhishini.  
*I thought you were going to help my mother in the kitchen.*
- Lizzy : What? Mina? No dear, hamba uyomsiza umummy, mina ngisayolala kancane.  
*What? Me? No dear, you go and help mummy, I will stay and have some little sleep.*
- Dabula : Kusemakhaya lapha Lizzy. Umuntu akalali emini ngaphandle kogulayo.  
*This is a rural area Lizzy. No one sleeps during the day unless one is sieck.*
- Lizzy : Ubothi ngiyagula dear, please. Uyazi nawe ukuthi izandla zami ziwezwela kanjani amanzi. Nezinyawo zami ziyavuvukala uma ngike ngama isikhathi eside. Please dear, ngiyeke ngihambe, engakangeni udaddy noma umummy. Tell them I am sick, dear, please. You know very well how my hands feel about water. My feet swell when I stand for a long time. Please, dear allow me to go before mummy and daddy see me.

Dabula : Ok. Uyisabelo sami mntakwethu. Izinhlungu ozizwayo ziqaqamba kimi.  
Hamba uyocambala s'thandwa senhliziyo yami.  
*Ok. You are my gift, sweetheart. Your pains are felt inside me. Go and have  
some rest, love of my heart...*

Even when it is stated that Dabula is worried about the behaviour of Lizzy such a fact is never stressed as most of the text dwells mostly on how MaSibiya relates to Lizzy. The author fails to expose the fact that men can be manipulated by women against their wishes, in this sense women are capable of persuasive powers but this strength of women is hidden by texts and remains strange behaviour to the readers. Instead most of what is reinforced by texts is male supremacy and women's evil behaviour, which in turn is accepted by readers as the norm.

Ntuli has further demonstrated an imbalance of power across genders in that Makhoba, as the head of the family and the person who rules the family, succeeds in allowing what his wife disapproves of. The words that carry more weight in the family are that of a man and not a woman; the 'other', as observed by Hanretta (1998) who maintains that such powers are part of the patriarchal Zulu society and emerge out of the same traditional system which gave men a superior social position. "Women's powers rested upon the nature of male dominance..." Ntuli clearly wanted to highlight gender supremacy as well as recognition in characters by presenting them in this fashion. This he does by virtue of being a male author who is at an advantage of having been accorded an opportunity for authorship. Secondly, Ntuli shows and reinforces the poor relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law and the resultant division it carries within families. Systems of patriarchy operate in hierarchical forms in society as gender, race and culture in enforcing power. It is for this reason that anybody that is in power can use his/her authority over the less

powered body. Women in particular are no exception in exercising power in patriarchy. Unfortunately other women are victimized in the process because social structures like culture have robbed them off their freedom. Giving power to women (mothers-in-law) who have been oppressed by patriarchy against the powerless (daughters-in-law) has far-reaching effects on both parties.

Makhoba : Thula Masibiya. Noma ngabe uyingane uDabula, kodwa usezikhethela. Unamehlo, uyasebenza, uyakwazi akufunayo, ukhule ezibona izintombi. Nasedolobheni lapho ubezibona, kodwa wakhetha le oyibiza ngento wena. Noma kungaba yilento, into yakhe. Wena awungeni ngalutho kulokhu. NjengoMakhonya-ke lapha ekhaya, mina ngiyayivala lendaba kaDabula noLizzy.

*Shut up, MaSibiya. Even if Dabula is a child, he has made his choice. He has eyes, he works, he knows what he wants, and he has seen girls when he grew up. He has seen them even in the city, but chose the one you call a thing. Even if she is a thing, it belongs to him. You have nothing to do with it. As a Makhonya "final voice" in this house, I am closing this conversation about Dabula and Lizzy.*

MaSibiya : Ngithi lesisalukazi siyongena ngifile lapha ekhaya.

*I insist that this old lady will enter this home over my dead body.*

Makhoba : ...Ngithi-ke, uma umfana egculiswa, mina ngizomsiza. Angisafuni nkulumo manje, ungizwa kahle.

*I also insist that if the boy is satisfied, I will help him. I do not want any conversation. Am I clear?*

In the lines above Ntuli uses his position to exercise power and dominance in taking a decision that does not only affect him but the rest of the family. His absolute rule in the family means that his partner, MaSibiya is treated as a foreigner by her own husband in having a say on matters concerning their home. Nevertheless MaSibiya still maintains that Dabula will marry Lizzy over her dead body. This is a very strong way of persistence by Masibiya and should in some way worry her husband, but it does not. Certainly Makhoba may have been secretly worried about this matter but

could not let his wife know that it worries him because that would mean his power regarding making decision is shifting to his wife, something that they should guard against in the patriarchal system.

MaSibiya also has a conversation with her son, Dabula, about her concern regarding his choice of a wife. MaSibiya insists that Dabula will not marry Lizzy despite the fact that he has set a date when they will be tying the knot. She tells Dabula emphatically that Lizzy is too old for him, almost her age and refers to her as *isalukazi* (old lady). MaSibiya would understand and accept the situation if Lizzy was two, three or even five years older than her son. She states that it is even more worrying for her that Lizzy is more than ten years older than her son. She is furious that people will mock her son for marrying a woman almost his mother's age. Most importantly, MaSibiya fears that Lizzy will come after her husband, Makhoba, and he will choose Lizzy since she is a better *salukazi* than she is. Such unhealthy conditions are mostly prevalent in the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. According to the Zulu culture to be a good wife is to allow your husband to make decisions without your input as a wife. Women are only treated with respect which approximates that given to men when they reach old age (Ngcongco, 1993). Ngcongco looks at the African culture and explains the way cultures have power over a particular sex group, this being detrimental to the other group. This statement implies that women only lead in membership where there are only women. In the light of the above, however, women can only apply power to other women, as accepted and approved by culture. As a feminist it is difficult to accept the Zulu tradition that gives women authority when they approach the grave. Women deserve better and

claims that declare women as inferior should be challenged; reading texts with a critical eye is one of the ways of putting a stop to various forms of patriarchy.

Dabula tells her mother that Lizzy is a caring person and that he loves her for that and has made a decision to marry her no matter what his mother says. MaSibiya would prefer Dabula to marry a local girl of his age. Dabula leaves the conversation at that after she insists that she does not like Lizzy and will never accept her as her *makoti*. He and Lizzy leave for Johannesburg. Makhoba still assures Dabula of his full support for his marrying Lizzy. He tells his son that wedding arrangements should begin in July; the wedding day is now around the corner.

When in Johannesburg Dabula writes a letter to his mother informing her that Lizzy has left him for a rich business man in Johannesburg. They are getting married in July. He says he considers looking for a local girl as his mother suggested. MaSibiya is delighted when she hears the news. Makhoba claims that it is the ancestors that have stopped this wedding from happening.

Towards the end of the play one is shown further examples of male supremacy which is prevalent in a traditional patriarchal system. Both Makhoba and Dabula shut MaSibiya out of important matters in the family. It is ironic that MaSibiya, a childarer who has for a long time been responsible for the upbringing of Dabula is to be excluded when Dabula has to make a decision about his life. Aronson (1992) cited in Gallagher claims that both husbands and wives believe that it is women who should keep in touch with and care for kith and kin. This is a fundamental duty women are involved in within the family setting, however, in *Kwakhle kwethu* MaSibiya is not



accorded this opportunity at all. MaSibiya, a woman is only present as a shadow in the background for activities of men, and only the bare bones of women's roles are described, as stated by Hammond and Jablow (1976). These authors state that the field of culture and personality inevitably include some focus on women in their interactions with men, and as mothers in relation to their children. On the whole, the information on women is fragmentary, disparate, and often distorted (Hammond and Jablow, 1976). Clearly the gaps that are evident relating to women's work are for a reason. Existing texts intentionally ignore or erase the importance of women's experiences (Thorne and Stacey, 1993: 168).

## Conclusion

The play *Kwakuhle kwethu* represents women to women's power struggle through its representation of a relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Beneath the surface of a woman's struggle there is a man who does not show any effort to compromise. Despite the power struggle between MaSibiya and Lizzy duties are clearly defined as feminine or masculine. Responding to the traditional belief, MaSibiya is represented as the wife attending to her domestic duties in the kitchen serving her husband. Thembi, most of the time is near her mother imitating feminine roles. This representation reinforces gender-specific roles. It is not normal, therefore to find Dabula and Makhoba doing the duties that ought to be done by females.

In this kind of representation the family acts as an institution and patriarchy is exercised through the enforcement of gender-specific roles; Men do not perform domestic duties. Zulu society values male satisfaction and accords it to them; men remain men because they do not engage in women's work. This is a form of patriarchal subordination to women. Furthermore, this representation promotes inequality between female and male characters. Where there are differences in the duties performed by men and women, inequality exists and ensures that one group is subservient to the other. The intention may be to lower or underestimate the status of women in the manner they are represented in the story. There is a need to expose this inequality because it diminishes both men and women. In marriages, in particular, happiness is seldom achieved through domination.

## UMNINIMUZI (Mbhele)

### Overview

The analysis of this story will be based on the elements that form part of the objectives of the study. Therefore in presenting this work themes of patriarchy, culture, language and inequality are discussed in relation to *Umninimuzi* and the manner in which female and male characters are represented. Drawing on the information from the themes, conclusion will be drawn.

### 4.7. Introduction

*Uminimuzi* is a play in rural life. It involves a change of lifestyle in characters because of retrenchment. This phenomenon has implications in that money can either keep families together or tear them apart. Traditionally in the Zulu culture men go to cities and look for jobs in order to support their families and women remain at home to take care of children and engage in subsistence farming practices to feed their families. Thus men remained bread winners of their families in their household. *Umninimuzi* gives one a glimpse of change in the traditional Zulu family.

The greater power traditionally given to men versus women is sometimes referred to as patriarchy, (Greene, 2006). This system allows men more power and control than women. *Umninimuzi* is largely influenced by patriarchy in the representation of characters. It is very clear that the author of this story subscribes to patriarchal beliefs. Here patriarchy is reflected in total domination and confirmation that, in patriarchy

men will always have power and control of their families regardless of the circumstances. Furthermore *Umninimuzi* confirms women's subordination in their crucial yet often devalued roles in the social organization of the household and the delicate role of raising children.

Ntuli is a traditional man who believes that a man is the head of the family and he rules the family. He represents a man who also believes in traditional weapons as he is presented praising the knobkerrie (*iwisa*) as one of the means by which one defines a man (*indoda*). Men use *iwisa* for both attacking as well as protecting themselves against their enemies, hence one is not man enough if one does not have *iwisa*. In a traditional lifestyle women lived a life of exclusion where the only place to which they have access to is the home, and specifically the kitchen. This system has been accepted by most rural Zulu women without question and it is taken as the norm that men work and women thus become their dependents. This practice is further promoted in texts. Texts tend to be biased in representing the supremacy of men over women. Patriarchy emerges clearly in these forms of dominating representations, especially when women are either represented as disobedient, lacking morals or as unscrupulous when trying to effect a change as reflected in texts. Traditional accounts assume that power as domination operates from the top down by forcing and controlling unwilling victims to bend to the will of more powerful superiors (Patricia, 1990). Clearly women cannot have authority, according to the role representing MaSibisi's character and certainly not in her own house. Undermining women in their homes underpins patriarchy.

Ntuli : *Indoda indoda ngewisa.*

*A man is a man because of a traditional stick.*

The presentation of the introduction of the play gives a description of the kitchen of Ntuli and MaSibisi. All the furniture seems to be getting old and falling apart. Zacantan (2003) presents his understanding and implications of the kitchen for women:

The kitchen is a symbolic and practical seat of female identity. It serves as burial site for the umbilical cords of newborn girls. The cords of boys were buried outdoors, in the forest, field or mountains. The kitchen constituted both an arena within which even poor women might exert a medium of property rights and social control and a principal focus of female labor obligation in the economic parts that, along with sexual and other parts sealed patriarchal arrangements between husbands and wives (Zacantan, 2003: 136).

Zacantan's (2003) description of the kitchen gives a political reason that is traditionally used in ensuring that women remain in the kitchen – a symbol of subservience. Even within the kitchen their supremacy is only recognized in their old age and obviously they have less of a contribution to make to society. The presentation of roles is gender-aligned and in turn promotes patriarchy in *Umninimuzi*.

According to the narration in this play Ntuli lost his job two years previously and now that he is not working, things at home are starting to look shabby and there seems to be no immediate back-up system. This representation of a male character undermines the efforts of women by highlighting his contribution to home comforts. Ntuli's daughter is working but the author does not show any acknowledgement of that; rather the focus is on how old the furniture looks ever since Ntuli lost his job. Since the loss of his job, Ntuli and MaSibiya are together from sun rise to sun set. MaSibisi is not happy to be with her husband (*umsansanana wendoda*) and states that Ntuli should go and look for job as they can not live on the food that is provided by their daughter, Zokwenzani.

- MaSibisi : (uyathetha)... Awunakile nje, uzithela ngabandayo. Ujabulela khona nje ukuba ulokhu ujika nezithangama kuze kushone ilanga. Uyasuka lapho uzoququbala lapha etafuleni, ufundana nephepha. Ufunda ezombangazwe ukhohlwe ukufunda ohlwini lwezemisebenzi. (*Shouts*)... *You just do not care. You are keeping cool. You enjoy changing the position of the sun rays until the sun sets. After that you fold yourself on the table, reading a newspaper. You are reading the politics and forget the career section.*
- Ntuli : (Athi ukwehlisa iphephandaba leli alifundayo, akluluze uMaSibisi ngeso eliphuma phezu kwezibuko kodwa angaphumi nazwi). *He lowers the newspaper he is reading, and gives MaSibisi an intimidating look but does not say anything.*
- MaSibisi : ( Abheke ngakuNtuli, amthole naye embhekile. Badonselane amehlo) Ehhe! Into oyaziyo kuphela yiyo leyo yokuba ulokhu ungidonsele amehlo. Lutho kodwa umsebenzi. Sibulawa yindlala kodwa kukhona umsansanana wendoda uhlezi... *(She looks at Ntuli's direction, and finds him staring at her as well) Yeh! The only thing you know is to pull your eyes at me. Nothing about the job. We are dying of hunger but there is umsansanana man sitting.*
- Ntuli : Awukadeli ukucevuzwa MaSibisi? *Have you not done enough talking?*

Noticeable is the manner that Ntuli handles his wife when she provokes him. He either keeps quiet or else says little, regardless of the stinging words from his wife. MaSibisi wants her husband to go and look for a job. They are starving and Ntuli does not seem to care. Ntuli shows dissatisfaction and asks if MaSibisi is not done with being talkative (*ukucevuzwa*). From the outset it is clear that this play presents married couples with different personalities and images. While gender role division is obvious it is also of interest to note that there seems to be a power struggle which greatly emanates from their financial situation.

Fairclough (1995) is right when he infers that texts provide evidence of ongoing processes such as the re-definition of social relationships, reconstitution of social identities and the reconstitution of knowledge and ideology. He maintains that it is increasingly through texts that social control and social domination are exercised (Fairclough, 1995). I am concerned with the manner in which MaSibisi's character is represented in this study. It is not uncommon for a man to lose his job and depend on the salary of either his wife or child. The scenario in *Umninimuza* favours a male point of view. No matter how hard things in life turn out to be, Ntuli does not lose his status. He maintains his position as a man and thus the leader of the family which is largely patriarchal. On the other hand, MaSibisi is the victim of circumstances. Her character represents a person who is easily upset by difficult situations and eventually she loses her position as both a mother and a wife. This representation is encoded in society through texts and it is accepted as the norm. In this manner it affirms what Fairclough (1995) calls social control and social domination.

Fairclough's assertion is valid but though texts provide evidence of real-life situations, they may be influenced by authors in terms of ideological affiliation and cultural background of their origin. As a result characters' roles may either be exaggerated, undermined, misrepresented or underrepresented. It is unfortunate that Ntuli's character is represented in such a way that his weaknesses and shortfalls are overshadowed by MaSibisi's behaviour; as depicted by some writers. *Umninimuza* is authored by a male and it appears that Ntuli's character is represented to suit the author's motives as well as maintain the status quo – in this case male domination.

Lionnet (1995) states that text is one of the many aspects of culture. Culture plays a role in shaping our social world and as a result cultural ignorance or misunderstanding can lead to highly-undesirable outcomes (Griswold, 1994). In a male-authored text it is therefore possible that his text will display a condition in favour of his cultural affiliation. Thus we cannot treat texts as truly reflecting social interaction because they tend to favour one side over the other if manipulated by the author's view. Women are mostly represented in terms of the unacceptable behaviour they may display, and what they ought to do in order to be acceptable to society and to their husbands. Their role is observed and understood in comparison with the role of men and culture. This behaviour is persistently represented by MaSibisi's unbecoming behaviour towards her husband and eventually she is judged against how culture deems a woman to behave. Women therefore fight a losing battle in male-authored texts.

From this representation MaSibisi is portrayed as only respecting people because they have money. She does not value her husband because he has no income. She is materialistic. She makes it look as though it is Ntuli's choice that he is not working. Wodak (1997) states feminists are not merely concerned with the behaviour of women and men but rather by having a critical view of the arrangement between the sexes. In view of the fact that *Umninimuzi* once formed part of the curriculum for the higher classes in the Department of Education, this arrangement falsely depict a women's state of mind in relation to material things. As a result this representation gives the impression that women are not to be relied on in trying times. Thus as a text *Umninimuzi* represents characters in a biased form and this representation inscribes



gender bias. Even the title of the story, *umninimuzi* is informed by patriarchal beliefs that a house belongs to a man and a woman is subjected to man authority.

In communicating meaning, language plays an essential role. Certain words in the conversation carry meaning at deeper levels. Wodak (1997) infers that language is conceived of as a symbolical reflection and as one of the means a patriarchal society uses to discriminate, disregard and incapacitate women. In *Umninimuzi*, Wodak's inference is highly visible but the play is written in such a manner that it is impossible for a reader to recognize. Instead a woman is represented as solely responsible for her suffering. Wodak observes:

The language system was analysed as regards the treatment of women, and language was exposed as a means of legitimizing male structures with the intention, above all, of extracting women from being subsumed under general and male categories (Wodak, 1997: 33).

There are clear distinctions of language between female and male characters in this story and this distinction reveals male consistency in holding authority within the family. The role played by Ntuli reveals this behavior beyond any doubt. He does not work, has no money, does not contribute to his family but above all he remains the father and the ruler of his family. His use of language is not only sexist but also based on the premise that "due to their long history as public decision-makers, men not only determine the economic, political and social life, but also influence the functioning and the meaning of each individual language" Wodak, 1997. 33).

For example; Ntuli asks if his wife MaSibisi is not done with *ukucevuza*. *Ukucevuza* is a Zulu word that refers to a person who is talkative. Texts written by males do not only show inequality in issues concerning gender, but they also have a tendency to

use sexist language. Whether they do this consciously or unconsciously it impacts negatively on women as they are on the receiving end. Thus the author highlights another side of women which is that of being talkative and in most cases in senseless ways. Not all women like to talk a great deal and sometimes the same is true of men, however, to a reader this play makes it appear that only women are talkative and that men do not like to talk much. It also makes her appear to complain without justification. This representation of characters is sexist and gives a false identity of women. It makes her appear to complain without justification.

Is the manner in which women are presented by a male author similar to that of men if the author is a male? On one hand MaSibisi has the role of a nagging wife. This role is strongly portrayed in the choice of words MaSibisi uses when talking to her husband. As de Beauvoir (1945) states women are represented negatively by most texts and this representation is copied by society and preserved for generations and generations to come. MaSibisi wants her husband, Ntuli, to go and look for a job instead of staying at home. Ntuli is reading a news paper and his wife tells him to read the career section rather than the political section. In communicating her message to her husband, MaSibisi uses words like *ukujika nezithangama* (following the direction of the sun's rays), *ukuququbala* (sitting uncomfortably), and *umsansanana wendoda* (valueless man). MaSibisi's choice of words is cynical and insulting and clearly demonstrates that she has no respect for her husband. Again a woman's character is negatively represented and this on its own reflects the beliefs to which the author subscribes.

Traditionally in Zulu society a woman cannot talk to her husband using such words as it shows disrespect. Respect (*ukuhlonipha*) is highly valued in Zulu culture and it is most expected from women to their husbands. This representation gives only men the chance to talk or have a say in their family matters as premised by culture. If a woman tries to do what is culturally unexpected she is either ignored or accused as having a psychological problem. On the other hand, Ntuli is a man of few words and addresses his wife in a low voice. Conflict of cultural interests appears in this instance and the one who is at fault happens to be a woman. Culturally it is a wife who is supposed to be polite when talking to her husband. On the contrary in *uMnimumuzi* it is the man that lowers his voice to his wife. This does reflect traditional societies where behaviour adheres to patriarchal modes of conduct. This imbalance in the representation of characters reinforces gender inequality and in the processes creates a false picture of men's behaviour in a traditional society. Here the author presents a relationship between a married couple as that which is intolerant of one another and language is instrumental in communicating this message. In this instance a man is on the receiving end. The lack of respect is mainly caused by the fact that the husband no longer works thus no longer contributes towards the maintenance of his family. Ntuli, is most of the time, provoked and MaSibisi has the last word. She is stubborn and does not stop when Ntuli shows anger. In addition, she calls him names. de Beauvoir (1945) states that texts represent women as negative and men as positive, which in turn creates inequality. She points to power hierarchy with men at the top and women as subordinates as a cause of this representation. It therefore seems clear that when men are in control, as is the case with the authorship of *Umnimumuzi*, the representation of female and male characters will not be equal. Clearly, in this representation female characters feature as dominated by male characters and mainly

in the domestic sphere, which according to Cameron (1990) is the private sphere that appears to serve men's interests.

MaSibisi : Sengathi akwenamisi neze ukugqolozelana nendoda usuku lonke.  
Hamba nawe uyofuna umsebenzi wokuthutha *inyathi*, akwaliwa muntu.

*It does not please one to stare at a man the whole day. You can also go and look for a job to transport the sewerage. They do not reject anyone.*

Ntuli : (ulokhu ethule. Avuse ikhanda nje abheke uMaSibisi ogoqogoqozayo ezimbizeni).

*He remains silent. He raises his head and looks at MaSibisi who is busy cooking the pots.*

Ntuli does not talk much except for staring at his wife when she talks. MaSibisi tells her husband that it does not make her happy to keep staring at a man the whole day. She is suggesting that Ntuli should look for a job transporting sewerage waste (*inyathi*). His dignified response implies that men show understanding and respect and good manners in the way they approach their partners. Mills (1997) states that feminist theorists are concerned with analysing power relations and the way that women as individuals and as members of groups negotiate relations of power. Though this play does not divulge the state of the relationship of this married couple before the husband (Ntuli) was retrenched, it does highlight the fact that Ntuli's suffering is due to the loss of his job. Since he no longer provides for his family, respect shifts away from him. Drawing from Mills's statement and in line with de Beauvoir's point about women being negatively represented, MaSibisi's attempt to effect a change in her house is met with negative representation by the author. Her concern is valid and would worry anyone in her situation; however, it is clouded by her attitude which then

changes the focus from an unemployed husband to a disrespectful wife who undermines the head of the house.

Ntuli's wife (MaSibisi), on the contrary, carries on with her normal duties of an ideal wife. She cooks, washes dishes and cleans the house. She is in the kitchen, the place that has traditionally been occupied by women: the private sphere. This scenario confirms the stereotype that is, belief that the woman's place is in the home, and particularly in the kitchen. It also promotes gender inequality through the roles that characters perform. Despite the attempts by a few concerned individuals and government's attempts to have equality in roles through jobs that are not gender-specific, the switch of roles by different genders is still met with ridicule, surprise and even dismay, which could have happen if Ntuli is represented taking over the roles of housewife because of the situation he is in. It is, however, disappointing that MaSibisi is on her feet the whole day doing domestic chores and does not get help from her husband who sits reading newspaper and expects to be served all meals by MaSibisi.

Women are often largely excluded from the public sphere and are consigned the heaviest tasks of domestic labour for which they neither get paid nor are appreciated (Keesing1987). The situation in *Umninimuzi* marginalizes and demeans a women's character whilst imposing rules on them that clearly subordinate them and push them to secondary position. This representation is unacceptable and should not be seen as exemplary to readers and society at large. Keesing (1987) argues that some texts do not articulate an ideology counter to the dominant culture. Even if the context is as revealed in *Umninimuzi*, such instances obscure women's vital roles and represent women's roles as lacking coherence in a world dominated by males (Keesing, 1987).

MaSibisi is not happy about her husband not working and keeps reminding him to look for a job. MaSibisi's position of giving advice to her husband is normal but the manner it is represented negatively impacts on MaSibisi as a woman. This is noticeable because such behavior is against the expected stance of a traditional Zulu wife. The question one must ask is: What is the intention of the author in representing the role of a married woman and man in this fashion? Is it the perception the author holds in his view about women or it is just fiction that has no value to humankind or are these connotations or perceptions held by society, as Fairclough anticipated? I strongly oppose to this form of representation as it falsely assumes that all women are insensitive and adhere to unbecoming forms of behaviour.

What is also questionable is the manner in which the author presents male characters in the play. Hanretta (1998) states that in Zulu society a women's position as outsiders in the homestead affects power dynamics between themselves and their husbands in several ways. "On the one hand, a woman's lineage security, a shield against the power her husband could exercise over her". In *Umninimuzi* men are represented differently from the manner in which women are represented. Ntuli acts without being influenced by emotions. This representation in a male-authored text reflects male gender bias. The manner in which Mbhele, the author, represents married characters in *Umninimuzi* differs greatly from the manner in which male and female characters are represented. Such representation promotes male supremacy over women. MaSibisi is a talkative, nagging, annoying wife and she shows a lack of discretion and sound judgments, in the manner in which she tries to make Ntuli realize that he should go and look for a Job. She could advise him without disrespect. These are forms of

representation that are generally assigned to women (de Beauvoir 1970) in texts and are imbibed by readers and taken as norm. Ntuli is continuously pushed to the edge by his wife but does not lose his temper. This presentation does not reflect the typical married man who reveres his stick in the traditional Zulu society. Again the representation of Ntuli's character is too good to be true. In traditional society men rarely behave like that. For Millet (2003) patriarchal societies are ones wherein, if examined closely, men hold positions of power in virtually all decision-making spheres. This alone indicates that texts that are male-authored appear to have been written from a man's perspective and as such reveal inequality in gender representation.

Ntuli has been a typical traditional Zulu man who works in order to support his family. The condition of the furniture proves this. Now that he no longer works, the furniture start wearing out. He has been a responsible husband and father of his family. The representation of Ntuli marrying an irresponsible unscrupulous wife who displays an unbearable behaviour proves women are failures and that men are virtuous. Ferrell (1992) states that text must be viewed not only as fine art, but also as an argument of social influence. When reflecting on Ferrell's statement it is certainly true that text as carriers of knowledge influence societal thinking and behaviour thereafter. Throughout his career Ntuli has been supportive of his family and according to this representation there is no one else, not even the two women in the Ntuli family (MaSibisi and Zokwenzani) who is able to continue with the big job Ntuli had been doing. It is a belief in society that men as heads of families are also supposed to provide maintenance for their families. This belief is also articulated in texts and shared by larger society. MaSibisi's role as a wife is exaggerated and

undermined. She does not show the appreciation to her husband for having supported them neither does she advise her child, Zokwenzani, to do what her father has been doing so that furniture does not wear out. What is Zokwenzani supposed to do if she is already the breadwinner? She is stepping into a position previously a man's territory and suddenly expected to perform well. This form of representation sends a message that men will always dominate women since women have internalized a picture of their own inferiority so that even when some of the objective obstacles to their advancement fall away, they may be incapable of taking advantage of new opportunities (Taylor, 1994). Taylor (1994) argues that women in patriarchal societies have been induced into adopting a depreciatory image of themselves; hence MaSibisi does not think she can look for a job herself but insists that her husband should. According to her representation she can only do domestic work and only in her home and not to go out to earn money. The division of labour within the public sphere (as in the home) is dependant upon cultural understandings of men and women being different and more suited to different types of work (Alsop/ Fitzsimons/Lennon, 2002).

My intention here is not to promote violent behaviour in this study but it is to expose to readers how unreliable some information from texts can be and how dangerous it can be to accept the information without being critical. *Umninimuzi* testifies to this in the manner male and female characters are represented. Ntuli's response to his wife's behavior at times carries with it some connotations. Ntuli ignores his talkative wife and sometimes he gives her an intimidating look. This response can mean, among other things, that Ntuli adopts a principle of regarding his wife as an object and opts not to waste his energy arguing with her so he ignores her. The assumption is that



married women behave in such a manner and should be ignored in situations similar to that of MaSibisi - just as Ntuli has done when solving problems within a marriage set-up. Generally people get upset and angry when provoked, as in the case of MaSibisi's impertinence. As he claims to be the ruler of the family, Ntuli should be in a position to control his wife and put an end to the manner she speaks to him, but his role is represented as a person who is peaceful and does not resort to anger to control difficult situations, in contrast to his wife who is represented as causing discord within the family.

MaSibisi's attitude towards her daughter is completely different from her attitude towards her husband. She has high regards for her daughter. She respects her for being employed and having an income. What a degrading way of representing a character! MaSibisi justifies all her daughter's wrongs. She approves of everything Zokwenzani does and says. Because Ntuli is not putting food on the table, he does not deserve to be treated well. She judges people based on their material possessions. She does not think that people who have nothing deserve respect.

Women representation is reflected in marital relationships and roles they hold in society. MaSibisi as a housewife prepares food, washes dishes and cleans the house. These are the roles expected from a traditional Zulu woman. Hanretta (1998) states that some historians have concluded that until the arrival of capitalism there had been no substantial changes in situations, power or status of women within Zulu society. Ntuli, now that he no longer works, only maintains the roles of being the man, who rules the family. This behaviour is confirmed by Uma's (1997) suggestion that the status of a man does not totally depend on his being a provider. Although he may not

be the absolute provider, Uma maintains, he is still the dominant force and authority in the house. Even when he has less of a load of work in the house, Ntuli does not help his wife with the duties she has. Domestic chores remain her territory and no one else's. Ntuli remains as an authority figure, thus the author has reinforced gender roles by means of a text.

Such roles remain active in societal activities as they are conversely modelled by society. Gender roles in this regard have been exercised in conjunction with the sexualisation of language. Uma (1997) observes that most writers who deal with familial relationships rely on stereotypic representations of women, the subservient wife, the evil temptress, the doting mother, the strong grandmother. Even though presented as a man of good manners, Ntuli uses sexist language that in turn negatively implicates the rest of women in society for example, *ukucevuza* is almost entirely used for a talkative woman not a man. Sexist language is used to elicit subordination. It is a feature common both to gender-segregated work settings and to more mixed ones (Gherardi, 1995).

Apart from the sexist language which largely inflicts harm on women, *Umninimuzi* reflects sexual division of labour. Male roles are frequently seen to be more important and of greater social standing than female-identified roles. Such a division of labour between genders affirms that the status accorded to men and women within societies is not equal. The purpose of the author may be to show the negative side of married women as is the case with MaSibisi, but he does not take into account the fact that if there is a crisis between two parties one has to come up with the solution and not add to the problems. Ntuli does not help the situation by not working, and spending time

reading papers. In fact he is worsening the situation. Responsible men have to be responsible for their families, and this may involve a struggle supporting them. In this case the reader should see the other side of Ntuli - depicted as worrying and hunting but that is not shown in *Umninimuzi*, neither does the author represent this weakness in Ntuli instead the focus of this story represents MaSibisi's bad character. Sadly, as a man in authority in the family, Ntuli does not need to be questioned nor advised by a woman; instead he is waiting to be served by his wife. Since women together with children have been men's responsibility in the traditional Zulu culture it calls for Ntuli, as the traditional head of the family, to start making a difference in his family; and this way of representation where the author tarnishes the character of women in order to serve his intentions of nurturing readers with patriarchal beliefs that have the subordination of women as their motive cannot be condoned. Ntuli should stop feeling sorry for himself and start facing responsibilities as a 'man'. Men should not be providers only if it suites them and their circumstances.

Henrietta (1998) claims that women's subordinate role in society 'did not cause any dissatisfaction among them', and argues that women accepted their position and were contented. It is not surprising therefore in this text of *Umninimuzi* to discover that women's role is in line with how society views women. Furthermore, such presentation of women's role favours patriarchy and opposes the adoption of gender-equality as anticipated by Hanretta (1998). Gender role affirmation involves cultural constructions which in turn shape societal thinking and behavior thereafter. With the available literature at their disposal society is able to model the representation of roles in texts thus fulfilling cultural purposes for an example, assigning women roles that require full responsibility in the household. Hanrietta (1998) claims that the defining

condition of women in Zulu society was one of oppression, but at the same time women were located at the very source of power within society: agricultural production. It is disappointing that this within society is neither exposed nor acknowledged. It appears that it appears that since literature has been men's sphere of influence, it would be disingenuous for them to praise and appreciate the efforts of their subordinates - women. In this regard one can therefore assume that male-authored texts have a major influence on how women characters are represented in texts; unfortunately the representation of women is largely negative.

Not only is MaSibisi presented as a no-good wife, she is also carrying the role of being a mother to Zokwenzani. Zokwenzani is the only child in the Ntuli home. She works at a firm in the nearby town. The family depends on her for food and other household necessities, which is something in the past that did not happen so often in the traditional Zulu family. Foucault (1972, cited in Taylor 1990) states that power has a relation to body and in turn can be used in the oppression of women which means that sexuality is as a results of the effects of historically-specific power relations. Historically girls and their mothers remained at home doing domestic work. It was the father and the sons that could leave the house to go and look for jobs. Foucault infers that society produces its own truths and gender is seen as the cultural means by which natural sex is produced prior to culture. What is happening in Zokwenzani's case is rare and not a desirable example in the traditional Zulu family and as such is ignored. Culturally it is bad for a father not to be able to support his family but it is even worse if he is bailed out by the efforts of his daughter. He is found wanting, however, when considering the fact that this is a male authored text, Zokwenzani's good work has to be spoiled somehow and she is represented as a bad

character. While the woman, out of economic necessity, goes to work as is the case in *Umninimuzi*, this economic independence, this illusory power, in a way enhances rejection by her man (Uma, 1989). Being a bread winner in traditional Zulu culture is a man's responsibility, not a woman's. Zokwenzani anticipates a role that is historically and culturally her father's. Unfortunately she gets rejected and culture and its dictates mean that she remains in her rightful place of being a child. Zokwenzani's character may have been represented in this negative manner, not necessarily to show women's efforts in improving a life but to reject women's independence and portray them as failures who are not good enough to lead even when opportunities arise. She believes that because the whole family depends on her she has the right to do as she pleases and she does not want to be reprimanded by her father. Her role of providing food for her parents gives her the right to dictate and do all the wrong things. Zokwenzani has the full support of her mother who spoils her. She loses respect for her father and moral behavior. She has no morals.

MaSibisi insists that Ntuli should find job old as he is.

MaSibisi : Ngeke phela siphile ngalobuchwabalala obuholwa nguZokwenzani efemini. Yihlazo phela leli ukuba siphakelwa yintombazane, kube kukhona umsansanana wendoda onguqhwayilahle, ohlezi ekhaya ebhekwe ukuphakelwa.  
*We cannot make a living out of these peanuts earned by Zokwenzani at the firms. It is disgusting to be fed by a girl, while there is umsansanana man who does not work and who sits and expect to be fed.*

MaSibiya maintains that they cannot only live on the small amount of money that is earned by Zokwenzani and Ntuli should go and find job. MaSibisi finds it a disgrace to be fed by a girl, a belief that is strongly held within the traditional Zulu culture.

Stereotyping is enforced through the representation of MaSibisi's mentality. What seems to be highlighted most in the conversations MaSibisi and Ntuli have is the negativity of MaSibisi as a wife, a mother and a woman. She continues to call her husband annoying names repeatedly; names like *uqhwayilahle* (a negative Zulu word that refers to a person who is jobless). Her role is characterized by lacking morals (for example, she scolds at her husband and talks to him in an unaccepted manner) and being unprincipled. No matter how MaSibisi provokes her husband, he (Ntuli) always addresses matters tactfully and is always in control of his emotions. This representation, on the contrary, presents MaSibisi as a trouble maker and portrays her nonsensical attitude towards her husband.

Ntuli : Angiyithandi indlela okhuluma ngayo kimi MaSibisi. Ungalokothi nje uphinde ungibize ngoqhwayilahle.

*I do not like the way you talk to me MaSibisi. Never again call me qhwayilahle.*

MaSibisi : Ngiyaxolisa-ke.

*I am sorry.*

Ntuli : Ukuxolisa kwakho akusho lutho. Akusho nolunci. Ngikukhuza kulokhu nje uzobe sewuqhamuka nokunye futhi ukungeyisa. Selokhu ngalahlekelwa ngumsebenzi nje wena ungiphathisa okwengane ekhasayo. Awungazi nokuthi ngiyini lapha ekhaya. Lokhu kungeyisa kwakho sewukufafazele no Zokwenzani. Nayo lengane ayisangazi noma ngiwuyise noma ngiluhlanya oluhlala kubo. Nguwena okhweza lengane phezu kwami. *Your apology does not mean anything. Nothing. I am stopping you from this now you will soon come with something to annoy me still. Ever since I lost my job you have been treating me like a crawling baby. You do not know what I am here at home. Your behaviour has spilled on to Zokwenzani. She also does not know whether I am her father or any idiot living in her home. You are causing this child to disrespect me.*

Clearly from the manner in which MaSibisi is presented she resembles a woman who does not stick by her husband in trying times. This representation is often not true

within marriage settings. Women often bear suffering in society and this does not match the representation of MaSibisi who is overwhelmed by the financial situation of her husband. This representation does not fit what is traditionally believed about the character of women and the manner they are represented in *Umninimuzi*. Stereotyping is also reinforced when Ntuli blames the bad behaviour of Zokwenzani on MaSibisi. There may be more contributing factors to the new unacceptable behaviour of Zokwenzani. Exposure, peer pressure, the new status in her life, as well as personality may influence her behaviour towards her father, however, MaSibisi is the one accused. MaSibisi may not be innocent in this regard but I am concerned about the manner in which bad behaviour is associated with a woman while a man remains innocent. When considering marriage vows and promises of helping each other in sickness and in health and linking it with Zokwenzani's behaviour it is clear such vows do not exist as raising a child eventually becomes the responsibility of a woman and this representation promotes inequality of gender.

Feminists point out that personal inequality is justified by using personality traits of a man and a woman. Gender ideas are used to justify unequal treatment. Ntuli is not happy that his daughter arrives at home from work very late at night and leaves early in the morning. He has not been seeing much of his daughter since she started working. MaSibisi is covering for her and making an excuse about the probability of overtime at work that keeps Zokwenzani late. Ntuli is sceptical about MaSibisi's claim. The subordinate social position of MaSibisi as a woman is rooted in socially assigned sex roles. This study challenges these conventional sex roles that, in the long run, cripple women's lives. The manner in which *Umninimuzi* represents characters affords men power over females whilst at the same time marginalizing women. This

form of representation characterizes women as serving the unjust social order which values men more highly than women. In challenging subordination of women through the division of labour in gender-specific roles I draw on Tong's work on equal rights. Tong holds a belief about human nature which stresses the capacity of human beings for rational thought. All human beings have the capacity to think and act rationally and I infer that roles given to them should not be in compliance with what is stereotypically believed to be associated with their gender. Gender-specific roles are associated with women oppression in the private sphere. Assigning women roles in the private sphere means that authors too subscribe to women suppression in the manner they represent women in texts.

Zokwenzani has a boyfriend and this could be the reason for her coming home late from work. Ntuli has become suspicious of this matter and decides to stay up till Zokwenzani comes home. In her conversation with Ntuli, MaSibisi does not see anything wrong about Zokwenzani's late home coming. She tells Ntuli that he should not check on Zokwenzani's times as she is no longer a child. MaSibisi also tells Ntuli that when he was still working no one checked on his home coming times. Ntuli becomes furious about MaSibisi's comment and tells his wife not to compare him to a child because they are not equals. Zokwenzani is a female child and he as the father should set rules for her and he insists that that is his role. MaSibisi says Ntuli should turn a blind eye to what Zokwenzani is doing, especially because she has grown up. Ntuli is against all that and wants to safeguard his daughter so that she gets *umendo* (married). Ntuli calls his wife *inkehli* (relational confidante) to her child.



Ntuli's roles are that of a protector, an authoritative figure in the family and a person who talks sense in *Umninimuzi*. He may not be in a position to put bread on the table for his family but that has not changed him as a person and his roles as a man. The representation of a man versus woman behaviour is biased and enforces gender stereotype. A man is logical, as assumed by societal characteristics assigned to males, and he is strong in spite of the difficulties of not working. When considering the fact that this text is read by many people it is not difficult to measure the damage of readers' perceptions about women. This representation shows that women can go as far as doing dirty work in order to get well looked after. All mothers want what is best for their children regardless of their gender, but to think that you can allow your child to feed you at the expense of using her body is beyond insulting women. It is the assurance that the author sends to readers: how unfit, weak and lacking in logic women can be. This representation shows MaSibisi supporting of her child's prostituting and Ntuli is the only rational being who can see wrong in what is going on.

It is true that women have long been cocooned in the private sphere of the home, not by choice, but because of the virtue of being women and their cultural eligibility (de Beauvoir, 1975). It should not be surprising therefore to find Ntuli in the role of being a father and not expressing gratitude for the fact that his daughter, Zokwenzani, is working (the role that is traditionally supposed to be his) and supporting the entire family; instead Ntuli is on a fault-finding mission. Zokwenzani has been represented as a girl who displays outrageous behavior which lowers the respect for morals as well as the integrity of rural girls; this representation is in line with stereotypic perceptions mostly perceived about women's bad behaviour. Having an affair is

natural for both women and men but it is not met with equal or similar articulations regarding both sexes. For males it means they are building their families and initiating responsibility if they have an affair but for females it is met with criticism, lack of self respect and disrespectful of adults. Though *Umninimuzi* shows one side represented by Zokwenzani, generally and specifically within traditional settings females are not encouraged to have intimate relationships as opposed to males who often are encouraged to do so for the good of their image and status. This representation also promotes masculinity. In this instance the author promotes male domination by suppressing women through denied access to life activities. Ntuli continues to exercise his power in the family even when he is financially unable. This representation proves that patriarchy still exists as affirmed by culture and proves women's ineffectiveness even in cases where women have the potential and ability to dominate. Such representation belongs to the feudal system and should be condemned and such texts should be exposed. They reflect inequality in character representation and inequity to women by keeping their roles purely women owned. Secondly, interrogating the position of the author will help to raise eyebrows and make writers aware of being gender-sensitive when presenting roles to characters and noting that they should not adhere to the stereotypes perceived by society.

Ntuli has noticed that MaSibisi stays up till late waiting for Zokwenzani to arrive from work. She prepares food for the evenings and the morning. Ntuli warns MaSibisi against allowing Zokwenzani to disrespect him. He is still her father regardless that he is not working. Ntuli decides to stay up till Zokwenzani arrives, inspite of the fact that his wife asks him to go and sleep. MaSibisi, on the other hand, becomes anxious when it nears Zokwenzani's arrival times. Ntuli is aware of MaSibisi's actions and when

they hear the sound of a car MaSibisi wants to get out but Ntuli does not allow her. For the first time Ntuli's true colours (that of a chauvinist).

Zokwenzani is represented as a female that is corrupt and has loose morals. She gets along easily with her mother because her mother approves of and tolerates her behaviour. This representation can mislead readers as they can be under the impression that women are not able to give valid advice and are instead capable of poor judgment. Even in cases where women get the opportunity to lead, as is represented by Zokwenzani, they prove to be failures and do not display a sense of courage and integrity. They cannot seem to lead as they have poor judgment. Zokwenzani is bossy but not a good judge of character. Her choice of a boyfriend proves that. On the contrary, Zokwenzani's father, Ntuli, is very quick to detect the character of her boyfriend. Again when Zokwenzani decides to leave home and start her own life on the spare of the moment she is shown to lack vision.

## Conclusion

This analysis has shown that the representation of female and male characters is different and not equal. Roles assigned to characters are gender-specific. Equality is not maintained and bias is also prominent in the manner characters are represented in *Umninimuzi*. Male and female roles adhere to the stereotypes in our society that most often positively portrays men.

Patriarchy is exercised within the parameters of culture and puts women in a marginal position. Within the cultural framework women are denied access to some duties while men sit in top positions of those duties; for example, making decision within the family still remains the man's responsibility and this behaviour is reinforced in the texts we read.

Marriage and home are institutions where patriarchy is exercised and women fall victims of such practices. Generally, women's roles are domestic and in the private sphere and are represented as not fitting to the public sphere for men.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the book *Ishashalazi* represents male and female characters in completely a different manner based on the two stories, *Kwakuhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*. Most texts represent women in roles that are neither prominent nor triumphant while the role played by most men is represented positively and such representation yields recognition of males as omnipotent and deserving of respect from women. The positive representation of males in *Ishashalazi* benefit males but at the same time causes harm to women.

This study reveals that oppression in any form of domination of women takes place within the family. Thus family forms part of the institutional structures where oppression of women is exercised. This text has been an instrument in effecting this oppression through the manner it has used to represent characters. Texts often use cultural beliefs that are believed in by society to exercise oppression over women. Within this belief women and children remain the property of males in society. Culture precedes all social activities as it prescribes behaviour to its members. It is culture that promotes male supremacy which manifests itself in the belief of patriarchy. Patriarchy pronounces the rule of men over the less-empowered body of women.

In both stories women are badly represented and such representation may soon be imitated by readers and taken as normal. In both situations of the stories the scenarios

take place at home in a family setting. Thus a family has been used as an institution where male domination prevails. In a family, and particularly within marriage, men dominate women and as a reason for their action they quote culture. Women are prohibited by the proclamations of culture to do and not to do some of the things which most of the time affect their lives. Such prohibitions give primacy of men in the family at the expense of women who are, most of the time, expected to respond to the suffering imposed by the very men they are expected to love.

*Ishashalazi* presents marriage as a socially-recognized, durable relationship between men and women. Men in general have higher status and authority over the women of their families. It is within the families where gender-specific roles are encouraged. Men and women of families have distinctly-drawn lines between work that they do and under no circumstances can one gender engage in the roles that are for the opposite gender. Decisive roles on matters pertaining to the livelihood of any individual member within the family rest upon men. Women's inputs do not feature in decision-making. Their sphere of influence is the kitchen and remains that even in matters concerning their lives. In this way family plays the role of a human institution where patriarchy is promoted on the pretext of culture.

Neither of the stories feature the characters in an equal light; the characters' representation is informed by their gender, in line with societal beliefs about gender-specific roles. Culture also plays an essential role in effecting patriarchy. This study indicates the extent to which cultural images of women are internalized and used as sources for individual attitudes and beliefs. This text plays a role in conveying images of males and females into what is culturally-accepted. Male characters play central

roles and most of the times appear victorious. This is not the case with the women in both stories. The reason for representing females in less-prominent roles may indicate the unwillingness to portray females as having direct power or being credited with fine qualities.

In both the stories men represent the roles of solving problematic situations through the power they possess and they display intelligence in resolving those situations. In *Kwakuhle kwethu* Makhoba uses his position as a male figure to solve Dabula's problem about marrying Lizzy. It should be noted that most of the time when resolutions are taken by male characters; they inflict harm on the female. This is evident in the decision that is taken by Makhoba against his wife's wishes. This form of representation reinforces autocratic behaviour where males lay down rules regardless of the concerns of females.

The representation of married couples in *Ishashalazi* shows that women respond to the ideal tradition that is overshadowed by the traditional, suffering ideal of womanhood. This idea is represented by the roles that women are assigned. In situations where women deviate from what is expected as true and normal from a masculine point of view, their representation is that of one displaying unwanted behaviour. If the focus of the story centres on a woman, she is represented as manipulative, destructive, naïve, immoral or disrespectful. Such representation of female characters means that readers and children in particular, are exposed to unrealistic behaviour. From the manner in which female characters are represented in both stories there is a reluctance to grant female characters power to lead; authority is often exercised by an insecure male.

In both the stories similar occurrences take place. In one, action is initiated by a male (in *Kwakhle kwethu*) and a female (in *Umninimuzi*) but are received with different perceptions. In *Kwakhle kwethu* Dabula brings a woman home with the intention of marrying her and wants his parents to approve of the relationship. Dabula's actions are not questioned, neither is he accused in terms of disobeying cultural principles. Things seem to be regarded as well and good. In *Umninimuzi*, Zokwenzani, a female brings a boyfriend home. Firstly, she is represented showing an admission of guilt for her actions. Secondly, she is pushed into lying and confrontation with her father and judged on the basis of unacceptable behaviour based on cultural prescriptions.

Thus *Ishashalazi* is functional in instilling the culture's prescriptions of inequality where men are given authority to prohibit women's actions. Culture is biased and discriminatory towards women; even in similar situations it does not compromise on men's supremacy. Gender equality has been perpetuated through text in informing the behaviour of members in society. Women have to be represented as people who respond to the traditional suffering that is overshadowed by culture which promotes patriarchy in society.

The roles played by women are those of women succumbing to male domination. The manner in which characters are represented in both stories perpetuates gender stereotypes and reaffirms patriarchy. The language used in communicating the message demonstrates negative biases against women. This study finds that the representation of women characters affirm women's suppression and domination. This phenomenon is observed in the exchange of language through speech within



marriage settings and helps to create a fixed image of married women and men in the Zulu culture; it hinders the possibility of innovations that enhance a better married life by denying women's efforts.

The whole representation of female and male characters implies that the author subscribes to cultural principles or values that hold a low impression of women and demean the character of women. Besides the perception that society holds that women are weaker, less-aggressive, and more emotional, there is also a cultural understanding that men should have power and authority over women and that women should not have power over themselves or men (Phillips, 2003). Phillips' assertion echoes the scenarios that are represented by characters in the plays of *Ishashalazi*. In both the plays women's weaknesses and inabilities are affected by male power and authority. Such practices, Phillips refers to as acts of silencing where women are not heard and therefore cannot have influence on the practices that affect their lives. This silencing matters because of its injustice and for the devaluing of women's words that could be harmful to the male's sense of self-worth. It is through the very texts where we read of such practices of women suppression which are stereotypically modeled to society, and as such, manifest as acceptable behaviour.

Stereotypical behaviour which supports patriarchy reinforces gender imbalances in society. Gender-specific roles are clearly defined in both the plays. Nowhere do both stories represent a switch in the roles of specific genders. Though there is a representation of a power struggle between women in *Kwakhle kwethu*, their roles are specifically domestic and adhere to patriarchal manifestations.

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